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The Use and Effect of Mythological Figures
in Shakespeare's History and Roman Plays

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A thesis submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Summary

The thesis sets as its task an examination of both the use and effect of mythological figures in the History and Roman plays, excluding Titus Andronicus and Henry VIII. By "figures" we understand references of any sort that may contribute to or detract from the broad mythological designs the plays seek to develop. The argument of the thesis falls into two phases--the first covering the History plays, the second the Roman plays.

The plays of the First Tetralogy and King John are experimental in so far as Shakespeare manipulates, with varying success, a wide range of mythically propertied material. These plays, from a mythological viewpoint, do not stand as remarkable achievements of coherence or vision, but they do reveal a double potential. Firstly, the meaning of some of Shakespeare's imagery and allusion hinges on a mechanism of "two-way" significance in which a single figure assumes competing or contradictory connotations. And, secondly, these differing interpretations appear to fall into two well-defined, though not unrelated, mythological schemes: the English mythology and the anti-mythology. The English myth conceives of a paradisial England, free of civil war and committed to a policy of foreign conquest. The anti-mythology describes an England torn asunder by internal strife and wholly lacking in the heroic qualities of the English mythology. In Richard II, Shakespeare continues the development of the myth/anti-myth plan by extending its significances in both directions. We are invited to associate an idyllic and happy England with a second Eden--a world in which the values of the English mythology find full dominion. Conversely, an England held under the sway of the anti-mythology may be seen as a lost paradise. A "two-way cluster of myth figures, drafted from the earlier plays, but here pressed into more thoughtful and cohesive service, articulates each of these English worlds. Having presented his vision of a myth-paradise, the dramatist turns, in the Henry IV plays, to a search for a myth hero who

might suitably inhabit the heroic landscape. The quest is confused, though, by the claims of counterfeit heroes. Prince Hal is the true, but hidden, hero. He rises to push aside the bogus mythographers, and stands, at the threshold of Henry V, as the just representative of an ordered commitment to the dicta of the English mythology. Yet, while our acquaintance with that mythology in earlier plays ought to commend to us every aspect of the foreign military enterprise in Henry V, the text of the play itself betrays a certain reticence in that respect. Some of the figures that ostensibly serve the English myth are endowed with anti-mythological undertones, and the events of the play leave us with the saddening sense of a second Eden irrevocably lost.

In the political world of Julius Caesar's Rome, it is the effectiveness of reputation, manufactured out of words and token actions, that defines the individual's success or failure. This process of "synthetic" mythologisation is central to the second phase argument of the thesis. In Antony and Cleopatra we are aware, as well, of the artificial character of mythologisation in the Roman world, but such artificiality comes under increasingly pejorative scrutiny. Against the dour military bias of the Roman perspective, Shakespeare advances a fresh and vibrant mythology. The new myth emerges as a tenuous ideal, founded upon half-truths and the imagination, but admirable in its celebration of a human bond of love independent of conventional Roman mythologies. By way of contrast, Coriolanus works from the assumption that the Roman ethos is a desirable ideal. A Classical motif identifies and equates familial and national obligations, and, though the hero's departure from Rome might seem to herald the disruption of these bonds, the recurrence of the motif alerts us to his enduring Roman loyalties. These loyalties find open expression in Coriolanus' commendable, but fatal, restatement of fidelity to his mother before the gates of Rome.

Introduction

In evaluating the use and effect of Shakespeare's many mythological figures, we are conscious of a number of powerful influences. R.K. Root¹ and T.W. Baldwin² have, in different ways, gauged the extent and the sources of Shakespeare's Classical knowledge, and Richmond Noble³ has researched, in depth, the dramatist's use of Biblical quotation. The debt to the emblem books has not been and, perhaps, cannot be as confidently estimated. In the preface to Minerva Britannia, Henry Peacham⁴ notices a scarcity of English emblem books, and Mario Praz⁵ observes that, on the whole, emblem books did not flourish in England, despite the popularity of conceits in Elizabethan and Jacobean writings. Only four English emblematisers are known to have published work before 1600--Geoffrey Whitney, P.S., Thomas Combe, and Andrew Willet.⁶ Even so, it is probable that foreign editions were in wide circulation in England at the time Shakespeare embarked on his theatrical career. In making use of cuts from the work of Andrea Alciati and other continental emblematisers, Geoffrey Whitney clearly had access to publications from abroad. The nineteenth century researcher, Henry Green,⁷ has provided us with a persuasive catalogue of prints that suggest Shakespeare's familiarity with various emblem works, and while Rosemary Freeman⁸ does not consider such evidence conclusive, she does accept that the emblem book genre, in general, very greatly influenced Elizabethan literature. It is the sense of "influence" that is most pertinent to our own approach. The thesis does not claim that specific emblems are direct sources for images or themes in the plays, but rather that emblem books, as repositories of ideas current when Shakespeare was writing and with which he may have been familiar, may provide clues to and confirmation of the dramatist's mythological intentions.

It will always be a difficult matter to assess how far such intentions are conscious on the part of the dramatist.

In Coriolanus, where a Mars myth is important to the play's thematic development and conspicuously absent from its sources, it is likely that Shakespeare's mythological plan is both deliberate and conscious. On other occasions, there is some reason for doubt. The First Tetralogy and King John feel their way to a mythological development of sorts, but is the subtle and complex manipulation of myth figures in Richard II really the natural outcome of these earlier endeavours or is it the product of some unconscious inspirational surge that suddenly assumes command of the creative process? And the matter is even more complicated than this. Inextricably linked to the issue of authorial consciousness is the question of audience awareness. It seems reasonable to predict that an audience will grasp the immediate "local" significance of a mythological allusion, but who could expect them to recognise and comprehend an extended and intricate mythological development? Without the benefit of a great many viewings of the play or plays in question, it would appear to be an impossible task. Yet, a history of theatre criticism has revealed the nature of Shakespeare's artistry to be such that the obvious designs of plot and character are often echoed, reworked, or refined on levels and in ways that could not be immediately perceived by a listening audience. This, though, is not a licence to free interpretation. Shakespeare did not write with the interests of researchers and analysts foremost in his mind, and we are not entitled to herald every mythological allusion as a source of significance. If we are to find validity in an examination of mythological figures, we must seek out sustained and coherent myth designs that can be related to the intentions of Shakespeare's dramatic strategy.

It will be useful, at the outset, to define the types of mythologies to which this thesis will make reference. In the first place, a great deal of Shakespeare's usage centres around the invocation of pre-existing mythological figures. By way of example, we might cite the reference to Icarus at IV.vi.54-7 in 1 Henry VI--a reference that is faithful in sense and detail to the Classical myth. A second mythological type deployed by the

dramatist retains the nomenclature of traditional mythological figures, but builds new significances around those figures. The word "spirit" has particular connotations in terms of Christian mythology but, while Shakespeare does not ignore the familiar implications of the figure in the History plays, he is also prepared to endow the word with a meaning far removed from those of its Biblical origins. And, thirdly, there is the kind of mythology created by characters for themselves, as it were, in the course of the action. When Cleopatra discards the trappings of Classical mythology and articulates her own mythology of love for Antony, she establishes a self-made myth that owes virtually nothing to the terminologies of traditional mythologies. These, then, are the types of mythologies referred to in the course of the thesis. The divisions between them are not always as clear as might be expected. It is sometimes the case that a single mythological figure serves more than one type of mythology. Even so, if we are to approach some understanding of the complexities of Shakespeare's designs, broad distinctions of this kind seem necessary.

In the History plays we are aware of a conflict between an ideal and peaceful England, and an England all but destroyed by civil war. It is apparently part of Shakespeare's plan, at least in the early plays, that a peaceful England is or ought to be complemented by great military conquests abroad. The England ravaged by civil war is a desperate and bloody world where the glories of foreign campaigns are, at most, the subject of forlorn hopes. In approaching these opposing English worlds, it is useful to devise some frame of reference within which the competing significances may be defined. For this reason, the terms "English mythology" and "English anti-mythology" are deployed in the thesis to represent, respectively, the paradisial and foreign-conquering England, and the ignominious England torn asunder by internal dissent. The English mythology embraces a gamut of heroic English military qualities to which aspiring English heroes ought to adhere. The anti-mythology turns these qualities to the most unwholesome ends, deriving a rival myth whose precepts are incompatible with the well-being of the

individual, in particular, and the English realm, as a whole. A central cluster of mythological figures services both mythologies, providing a "two-way" mechanism of significance in which a single figure may assume competing, or, at least, contradictory connotations. However, when we come to the question of the Roman plays, the idea of a "mythology" and "anti-mythology" becomes less satisfactory. Julius Caesar, though undoubtedly influenced by the mythological schemes of the History plays, is more concerned with a power struggle within a given world than with a competition between opposing worlds. There is the sense that the raw materials for mythic greatness are of a standard issue, and that, to a large extent, the success of the individual depends on how skilfully he can manufacture his own mythology from the materials available to him. This process of synthetic mythologisation is one linked, as well, with the Roman heroes of both Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus, though in the former the emergence of a new love myth represents a departure from and an alternative to the typical modes of Roman self-mythologisation. We can, then, view the argument of the thesis as one falling into two distinct phases. The first phase is concerned with the myth and anti-myth schemes of the English History plays. The second phase develops the theme of synthetic mythologisation in the Roman plays.

The thesis does not include discussions of Titus Andronicus or Henry VIII. The author's mythological intentions in these plays are far removed from the thematic concerns that Shakespeare seeks to develop in those works that fall within the scope of the thesis. Further, their value in a developmental analysis of the History and Roman plays is compromised by the serious doubts that some critics⁹ have expressed with regard to Shakespeare's authorship.

The layout of the thesis conforms to the British Standard Institution's "Recommendations for the presentation of theses" (BS4821: 1972). All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from Peter Alexander's edition of William Shakespeare: The Complete Works (1978; rpt. London & Glasgow: Collins, 1979). In relevant cases, English books have been documented in accordance with

details provided by A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave in A Short-
Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland
And of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640 (The Bibliographical
Society, 1969).

In the documentation of references, London is assumed as the place of publication unless otherwise indicated. In the text itself, a date in brackets after an author's name or a book title refers to the edition consulted and not necessarily to the first edition of the work in question.

Introduction

Notes

¹ Classical Mythology in Shakespeare (1903; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1965).

² William Shakespere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke, 2 Vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

³ Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge (The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935).

⁴ Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroycal Devices (W. Dight, 1612), sig. A3^r: "I haue heere (kind Reader) sent abroad vnto thy view, this volume of Emblemes, whether for greatnes of the chardge, or that the Invention is not ordinarie; a Subiect very rare. For except the collections of Master Whitney, and the translations of some one or two else beside, I know not an Englishman in our age, that hath published any worke of this kind."

⁵ Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery (Roma: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, Sussidi Eruditi, 1964), pp. 157-8.

⁶ See Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 68.

⁷ Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers (Trubner & Co., 1870).

⁸ Freeman, English Emblem Books, p. 62.

⁹ For summaries of the authorship debates, see J.C. Maxwell, ed., Titus Andronicus, 3rd ed. (1961; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968), pp. xviii-xxvii; and R.A. Foakes, ed., King Henry VIII, 3rd ed. (1957; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968), pp. xv-xxviii. These are both Arden editions.

The First Tetralogy

To the Elizabethan translator Philemon Holland, mythology is "a fabulous Narration: or the deliuey of matters by way of fables and tales"¹ and mythologers are those who expound such "Morall Tales."² Neither the First Tetralogy nor its author wholly correspond to either definition. The plays, as mythology, fall short of a "fabulous Narration," and the rôle of Shakespeare, as mythologer, is not focused exclusively on ethical matters:

When first this order was ordain'd, my lords,
Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.

(1 Henry VI IV.i.33-8)

O, I could hew up rocks and fight with flint,
I am so angry at these abject terms;
And now, like Ajax Telamonius,
On sheep or oxen could I spend my fury.

(2 Henry VI V.i.24-7)

Now my soul's palace is become a prison.
Ah, would she break from hence, that this my body
Might in the ground be closed up in rest!
For never henceforth shall I joy again;
Never, O never, shall I see more joy.

(3 Henry VI II.i.74-8)

None of these allusions can be precisely traced to the known sources of the Yorkist Tetralogy, though each represents themes common enough in Elizabethan literature. The first is native English, the second Classical, and the third religious and emblematic. Shakespeare's distinguishing achievement is that he goes some way towards weaving these three separate mythic strands into a single fabric of myth and counter myth, of solid

English greatness and English depravity. This chapter sets as its task the examination of what may be termed the "English mythology" and its "anti-mythology."

An immediate objection may be raised against the critical usefulness of such an investigation. Of what interpretative value is a gamut of Biblical and Classical material, profuse and often superfluous, whose own inconsistencies deter a search for significance? The Tetralogy lays claim to more than a hundred references of this sort, many of them "local" in effect and lying within that vein of promiscuous allusion characteristic of some of Shakespeare's contemporaries. In fact, Malone cites the presence of numerous Classical figures that "do not naturally arise out of the subject, but seem to be inserted merely to show the writer's learning"³ as evidence in the case against Shakespeare's authorship of the Henry VI trilogy. This chapter adopts the position of those who argue that the Henry VI plays, whether revised or plagiarised, are, in some considerable sense, the work of Shakespeare.⁴ There can be no denying, though, that the delineation of coherent and unified motifs is hampered by an obvious confusion of mythic identities in these early plays. In 1 Henry VI, for example, Joan la Pucelle is described variously, by friend and foe, as an Amazon (I.ii.104), Deborah (I.ii.105), a bright star of Venus (I.ii.144), Astraea's daughter (I.vi.4) and the new patron saint of France (I.vi.28); and as a devil (I.v.5), a witch (I.v.6), a railing Hecate (III.ii.64), and Circe's collaborator (V.iii.35). The balance of French praise and English condemnation is to be expected and the general tenor of the references suggests this. But such diversity of allusion means that the respective adulation and condemnation of la Pucelle are both framed in terms that clearly signal a broad intent but lack sustained cohesion. "Amazon," "bright star of Venus," and "Astraea's daughter" each imply some kind of superlative but their disparity can present no solid and unified development towards a common end. In view of this, a methodical and consecutive examination of Classical and of Biblical names mentioned in the plays seems less satisfactory than an analysis of coherent image patterns to which selective

and, perhaps, more significant Hebraic and Graeco-Roman figures may contribute. To this end, the chapter will study the fabric of the English mythology and its antithesis in terms of the central motifs that serve to articulate both.

Barnaby Rich writes of the "decaie of Marciall discipline"⁵ in Allarme to Englande (1578)--an observation that appears to understand, of the English soldier, a traditional military excellence. The complaint is a sensitive one and we shall return to it in our chapter on Henry V. For the time being, let us conjecture that Shakespeare was well schooled in the theme of the English as a warlike race. The idea is a familiar topic of discussion in the writings of Tudor commentators, who often measure the extent of English martial achievement with reference to French conquests. Raphael Hythlodæus notes, in Sir Thomas More's Utopia (in which Hythlodæus is a fictitious foreigner), that "not even the French soldiers, assiduously trained in arms from infancy, can boast that they have very often got the better of it face to face with your [English] draftees."⁶ And Sir Walter Raleigh notices that "among all their warres, I find not any, wherein their valour hath appeared, comparable to the English. If my judgement seeme over-partiall; our warres in France may helpe to make it good."⁷ A few English writers seek to explain the origins of such greatness in arms. Richard Verstegan, in his discourse on "The most noble and renowned English nation," insists on the hereditary nature of the English warring spirit: "Our ancesters delighted in warre and hunting."⁸ England falls under the patronage of the god of war, Mars, Richard Argol confirms in a work first published in 1562, and this accounts for the Englishman's natural "fire of honour mounting by martiall prowes."⁹ Possibly, Argol has the legend of the Trojan Brutus in mind--a legend of Britain's Aenean and, ultimately, Martian ancestry still widely accepted, Aaron Thompson¹⁰ tells us, as late as the seventeenth century.

This sense of English martial prowess as an hereditary quality, as an ancient and ancestral right, is one to which Shakespeare refers on several occasions in the plays of the First Tetralogy:

Froissart, a countryman of ours, records
England all Olivers and Rowlands bred
During the time Edward the Third did reign.
More truly now may this be verified;
For none but Samsons and Goliases
It sendeth forth to skirmish. One to ten!
Lean raw-bon'd rascals! Who would e'er suppose
They had such courage and audacity?

(1 Henry VI I.ii.29-36)

Coming from the Frenchman Alençon, such praise is of particular interest. Andrew Cairncross defines Samson and Goliath as "typical O.T. strong men"¹¹ in the Arden edition of the play but does not comment on the allusion to Oliver and Roland on whom the significance of this passage pivots. Celebrated as military paradigms during the illustrious reign of Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver were allegedly killed in the pass of Roncesvalles in the year 778 during a surprise military encounter with an overwhelming Gascon force.¹² Further, Roland was the nephew of Charlemagne himself. G.H. Gerould,¹³ in his paper "King Arthur and Politics," argues that the whole story of the Trojan Brutus building a New Troy in England was invented by Geoffrey of Monmouth as a direct native British counter to the mythology of heroism and conquest the Normans had constructed around Charlemagne. In the "Corona Dedicatoria" to Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas, the name of King James is linked with the idea of the English monarch as "un Charle-magne encore."¹⁴ And Daniel Price, in 1613, addresses Prince Charles as "The Hope of Succession, Englands Charlemaine."¹⁵ Clearly, there is evidence to suggest that the English were, to some degree, concerned with compiling a myth equivalent to that of the French conqueror. Alençon's comparison of the progeny of Edward III's reign with that of Charlemagne's (the "Olivers and Rowlands") is all the more significant in view of this. The idea was not Shakespeare's own, and the obligation to Froissart is acknowledged in the text. Even so, the dramatist's interest in this snippet of information from the Frenchman's chronicles, when he already had a veritable mountain of material in Hall

to collate and condense, may in itself be indicative of his intentions.

In understanding present English military daring in terms of a revivification of an ancestral heritage deriving from the time of Edward III, Alençon articulates a mythology of English martial supremacy strengthened by association with his own native French mythology. The choice of Edward III as the source and fountain-head of this reviving militarist tradition is not all that surprising. The name of Edward III is almost synonymous in Tudor literature with foreign conquest. His achievements are extolled at length in works as diverse as John Rastell's The Pastyme of the People (1530)¹⁶ and Caxton's Chronycles of Englande (1475?),¹⁷ and at least mentioned in standard works on martial skills and strategy—as in Matthew Sutcliffe's The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes (1593).¹⁸ William Wyrley,¹⁹ in The Trve Vse of Armorie (1592), writes that Edward III created the Order of the Garter, a statement confirmed by Rastell.²⁰ Talbot elucidates the heroic qualities demanded by the Order of the Garter.²¹ He declares:

When first this order was ordain'd, my lords,
Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.
He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
Profaning this most honourable order,
And should, if I were worthy to be judge,
Be quite degraded, like a hedge-born swain
That doth presume to boast of gentle blood.

(1 Henry VI IV.i.33-44)

Gerard Leigh records that "in the time of king Edward the thirde, at one voyage, his souldiers were so laden with pray of arme, as they esteemed nothing but golde, siluer and Estrich-fethers."²² To Leigh, materialistic superlatives represent an

equivalent expression of military worth. Talbot's martial ideal is conceptual rather than tangible. We are presented not with gold or ostrich feathers, but with valour (line 35), virtue (line 35), haughty courage (line 35), credit (line 36), and resolution (line 38). It is intriguing that Talbot places "noble birth" (line 34) as the first requirement of a Knight of the Garter. Through his cowardice, Sir John Fastolfe has betrayed his birth and, fittingly, Talbot demands that he be degraded "like a hedge-born swain / That doth presume to boast of gentle blood" (lines 43-4). This vocabulary of condemnation styles Fastolfe as a "counterfeit," as a man whose rank and station do not match his actions. As such, Sir John can be no true inheritor of the ancient and warlike spirit, and Talbot pointedly slanders his lineage, claiming he "Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight" (line 40). The sense of piety that Talbot would here attach to the English military ideal suits well the symbol of the George (a jewel, named after the saint, which forms part of the insignia of the Order of the Garter), and the battle cry of "Saint George!" which, as Wyrley²³ tells us, was also instituted by Edward III. In tearing off Sir John's Garter at IV.i.15, Talbot exposes him not only as a military sham but also as one who is guilty of "Profaning," to use the hero's own words, "this most honourable order" (line 41). If we look forward to Richard III, we may decipher in the vilification of Fastolfe the promise of more sinister things to come. This is how Queen Elizabeth condemns Richard:

Thy George, profan'd, hath lost his lordly honour;
Thy garter, blemish'd, pawn'd his knightly virtue;
Thy crown, usurp'd, disgrac'd his kingly glory.

(IV.iv.369-71. Emphasis added.)

By the time the heroic ideal of the English mythology is deployed in Richard III, its terminology and accoutrements have undergone perversions and assumed ironies that Talbot himself unwittingly predicts, but surely could not have imagined, in his censure of Fastolfe. For the time being, at least, Talbot clings with steadfastness to the notion, first formulated in the play by

Alençon's reference to the English "Samsons and Goliases," that the English knight can and must remain faithful to a code of military conduct bequeathed to him by his illustrious and valiant ancestry.

But Alençon's idea of "rebirth" is not only an expression of a reviving military spirit. It is a familial process as well. The present Samsons and Goliaths are the physical progeny of those Olivers and Rolands who were themselves "bred" in Edward's reign. These two aspects of rebirth are skilfully harmonised in the relation of Talbot to his son John in the first play of the Tetralogy:

O young John Talbot! I did send for thee
To tutor thee in stratagems of war,
That Talbot's name might be in thee reviv'd
When sapless age and weak unable limbs
Should bring thy father to his drooping chair.

(Talbot to son. IV.v.1-5)

When Talbot wishes that his "name might be in thee reviv'd," his concept of inheritance encompasses connotations that are both physical and spiritual (in the military sense). The great reputation of Talbot's "name" is documented by Geoffrey Whitney in his 1586 edition of A Choice of Emblemes:

Hvniades, the terrour of the Turke,
Though layed in graue, yet at his name they fled:
And cryinge babes, they ceased with the same,
The like in France, sometime did Talbots name.²⁴

And the most immediate source of 1 Henry VI, Edward Hall's The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancaster and Yorke (1548), records that Talbot "obtained so many glorious victories of his enemies, that his only name was, and yet is dredful to the French."²⁵ In the next sentence, Hall also describes Talbot as a son of Mars, but Shakespeare does not take up that tantalising association (in fact, Mars is mentioned only once in the whole Tetralogy, at I.ii.1 in 1 Henry VI, and there insignificantly) opting, instead, for an emphasis on Talbot's very "name." This emphasis goes well beyond the warrant

of Hall's chronicle: at I.i.128 we are told that the English soldiers shouted "A Talbot! a Talbot!"; at I.iv.50 Talbot himself claims that the French so feared his name that they guarded him excessively; at II.i.79 an anonymous English soldier informs us that the cry of Talbot's name serves him as a sword; and John Talbot insists that he has a renowned name that must not be dishonoured (IV.v.41). The importance that the dramatist places on Talbot's name as the by-word of a military mythology is paralleled by an insistence that Talbot's son, John, is not only the physical progeny of his father but his military heir as well. The hope that "Talbot's name might be in thee [John] reviv'd" underscores Shakespeare's mythologisation of a process of physical and military regeneration of excellences. Another example of some significance in this direction is to be found in 3 Henry VI. The Earl of Oxford here addresses the Prince of Wales:

O brave young Prince! thy famous grandfather
Doth live again in thee. Long mayst thou live
To bear his image and renew his glories!

(V.iv.52-4. Emphasis added.)

Henry V ("thy famous grandfather") is not only of the same family line as Edward III, but he can also claim a similar military descent. In fact, Sutcliffe's treatise on the art of warfare celebrates these two kings together for their glorious success in France.²⁶ Throughout the Yorkist Tetralogy, Henry V is presented to us as a moral and military paradigm against whose feats the present is repeatedly compared and measured, a fine illustration of the quality of military achievement that is demanded by the English mythology.

Oxford thinks of Prince Edward as one in whom Henry V could "live again." This proposed renewal retains the two-fold significances of which we have spoken already. As Henry V's potential inheritor, the Prince of Wales must both "bear his image" and "renew his glories"—his inheritance is physically familial and spiritually heroic. Regrettably, Oxford's hope of renewal through young Prince Edward is a forlorn hope that is wisely qualified by the boy himself: "An[d] if I live until

I be a man, / I'll win our ancient right in France again /
Or die a soldier as I liv'd a king" (Richard III III.i.91-3,
emphasis added). The curse of civil war is the very stuff of
the anti-mythology, and civil dissent is condemned on many
occasions in the First Tetralogy, notably at III.i.72 and at
IV.i.147 in 1 Henry VI and at II.v.77 in 3 Henry VI. The young
Prince of Wales falls prey to terrors that characterise the
dramatist's vision of civil intrigues. Oxford's faith in the
rebirth of famous conquering achievements in France, in the
revival of glorious ancestral qualities, must stand always in
the shadow of that grim and most unfamilial incident in II.v
of 3 Henry VI where Father kills Son and laments, with an
appropriate reproductive nuance, the perversions spawned of
civil war:

O, pity, God, this miserable age!

What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly,

Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural,

This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!

(II.v.88-91. Emphasis added.)

As early as I.i in the first play of the Yorkist quartet, the
sheer desolation of the heroic ideal is encapsulated in Exeter's
terse annunciation: "Henry [V] is dead and never shall revive"
(line 18), and in Gloucester's bleak cry: "Is Paris lost? Is
Rouen yielded up? / If Henry were recall'd to life again, /
These news would cause him once more yield the ghost" (lines
65-7). There will be no renewal of great conquering deeds on
foreign soil--only the swift ruin of the foreign empire and
the inexorable descent into civil war. Shakespeare's anti-myth
perceives this failure and disintegration of the noble English
mythology not through an entirely independent imagistic scheme
but through the inversion and perversion of existing motifs.
The use of "Saint George" as a battle cry is a point in question.
Initially an archetypal cry of the Englishman Talbot (at IV.ii.55
and IV.vi.1) as he prepares to do battle with the French in
1 Henry VI, it is quickly commissioned into the service of
civil war to perform the unnatural duty of inspiring English

soldiers in battle against each other. The final perversion is executed by Richard III when, before encountering Richmond, he cries:

Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.

(Richard III V.iii.349-51)

The spleen was supposedly the seat of anger, but Richard's strange appeal to both the dragon and the dragon slayer in these lines marks, more importantly, a confusion of moral and military intention. The chaos of England has reached its nadir. The plays of the First Tetralogy deploy the battle cry of "Saint George" (used on nine occasions) more frequently than any other play, or group of plays, in Shakespeare's canon.²⁷ It is surprising that the dramatist does not choose to align and develop this theme more closely with the other elements of Edwardian military myth. Its ambivalent usage, though, does correspond to the polarities of the English mythology and the anti-mythology. Further examples of the transition from myth to anti-myth may be found in the images of the "soul" and the "womb," and both merit close examination.

The Tetralogy's religious imagery is, for the most part, profuse and unremarkable. Several critics²⁸ have made the point, implicitly or otherwise, that Shakespeare writes under the immediate influence of the Morality play tradition. Perhaps this stifles any innovative aspiration. "Devil" is an expression of damnation, "angel" of goodness--and, if statistics can be any measure of a fallen world, there are three times as many "devils" as there are "angels." The image of the "soul" offers a notable exception, contributing to the English mythology and its reverse. Here, in 1 Henry VI, the young Plantagenet addresses the body of Mortimer who has just died in the Tower of London:

And peace, no war, befall thy parting soul!
In prison hast thou spent a pilgrimage,
And like a hermit overpass'd thy days.

Well, I will lock his counsel in my breast;
And what I do imagine, let that rest.
Keepers, convey him hence; and I myself
Will see his burial better than his life.

[Exeunt Gaolers, bearing
out the body of Mortimer.

(II.v.115-21)

Many commentators²⁹ have indicated that the idea of life as a pilgrimage is of Biblical origin. None has suggested that Plantagenet's "thou" in line 116 refers not to the physical body of Mortimer but to his "soul," mentioned a line earlier. Once we recognise this possibility, a possibility enhanced by the change to the third person in line 118 ("his"), the notions of soul, pilgrimage and prison merge together in what we may call a verbal emblem, and the Gaolers' action of carrying the body of Mortimer out of his prison confines becomes a visual metaphor for the escape of the soul from the prison of physical life. The antithetical nature of the flesh and the spirit is a Biblical commonplace. In the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians (v.17) we read that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to another"³⁰--the enmity is made quite explicit. And the image of the soul imprisoned occurs quite frequently in Elizabethan drama. H.C. Hart, writing in a different context, brings attention to Lyly's Campaspe: "the bodie is the prison of the soule."³¹ Hart also quotes examples from Peele's Edward I, The Battle of Alcazar, and the second part of Marlowe's Tamburlaine.³² However, there does not appear to be an extant emblem book source available to Shakespeare harbouring a print of comparable visual detail to the dramatist's stage metaphor for the escape of Mortimer's soul. Only Francis Quarles,³³ writing forty years after the composition of 1 Henry VI, produces an emblem of any similarity--a bird (the soul) languishes in a cage (the flesh) while an angelic figure stands near, awaiting the release of the prisoner.

Shakespeare's intentions in styling Mortimer's captivity in the way he does may well be related to the nature and history

of the old warrior himself:

Since Henry Monmouth first began to reign,
Before whose glory I was great in arms,
This loathsome sequestration have I had;
And even since then hath Richard been obscur'd,
Depriv'd of honour and inheritance.
But now the arbitrator of despairs,
Just Death, kind umpire of men's miseries,
With sweet enlargement doth dismiss me hence.

(1 Henry VI II.v.23-30)

Aside from his personal regret that his own military greatness should have been eclipsed by his confinement, Mortimer's deeper concern is that Richard Plantagenet, who now comes to visit him, has been deprived of his rightful honour and inheritance--accession to the English throne. The betrayal of the natural reviving processes of the English mythology--the denial through imprisonment of Mortimer's right to exercise his prowess in arms, and the refusal, through obscurity, of Richard Plantagenet's ancestral claim to the throne (Henry VI himself confesses that his title is weak in 3 Henry VI at I.i.134)--is, to no small degree, symptomed by Mortimer's desire for death. In thinking on the "sweet enlargement" (line 30) that Death will grant him, he angles at a double sense of escape. His body will be carried forth from the prison confine by the gaolers, and his soul will, at last, break free from the prison of the flesh. This is, indeed, a "sweet" enlargement. In a tetralogy where many characters express similar inclinations, there is some justification in assuming that Shakespeare connects the idea of death as an escape from the pangs of life with the fall of the English mythology. Interestingly, Ronald S. Berman,³⁴ in his paper "Fathers and Sons in the Henry VI Plays," has brought attention to Mortimer's Biblical characterisation of Richard II as "the first-begotten and the lawful heir" (II.v.65). And Berman is not alone in feeling the need to articulate the evils of Henry VI's era in terms of an "original sin," which he defines as the deposition and murder of Richard II.³⁵ Unfortunately, the Tetralogy does not provide sufficient evidence to merit

some kind of association of the anti-mythology with the Biblical understanding of man's Fall, though the point will be of some relevance in later chapters. For the time being, it will be useful to look at two further allusions to the "soul" which consolidate the link between death and the English mythology reversed.

In 3 Henry VI, as the Queen's party enact a ritualistic execution of York, the dying man, after hearing of Rutland's brutal murder, longs for death at the hands of his captors:

Open Thy gate of mercy, gracious God!

My soul flies through these wounds to seek out Thee.

[Dies

(I.iv.177-8)

Clifford, the boy's killer, had vowed at V.ii.60 in 2 Henry VI to seek out fame, not in the heroic militarism of the English mythology, but in pure cruelty: "In cruelty will I seek out my fame." Despairing at this single act of inhumanity, even one as hardened to the ways of the world as York can no longer endure the savagery of life. The stab wounds inflicted upon York's body mix the literal and the metaphorical in granting the body leave from physical life and freeing the soul from the prison of the flesh. And in the next scene, when Edward hears of his father's murder, he exclaims:

Now my soul's palace is become a prison.

Ah, would she break from hence, that this my body

Might in the ground be closed up in rest!

(3 Henry VI II.i.74-6)

Full accreditation of Edward's sentiments must be tempered by the knowledge that, as son of York, he is of the new generation, a generation spawned of the anti-mythology. This perhaps will explain why his words savour more of rhetoric than of spontaneity and it is revealing that, for all his world weariness, he has, by the end of the play, enthroned himself as King of England. There is even a hint, brought finally to full fruition by King Richard III, that the generation of the anti-mythology actually enjoys the barbarity of its world. Young Clifford, as a prime

example, inherits a military quality from his renowned father that he perverts to the most inhumane ends. "In cruelty will I seek out my fame," he says, with his father's body slung symbolically over his shoulder. English youth is no longer inspired to conquests abroad but to savageries at home. For those who would aspire to the glories of the English mythology, death is, to use Talbot's words, "the end of human misery" (1 Henry VI III.ii.137) in this fallen English world.

As a symbol of regeneration, the image of the "womb" is of natural interest in plays so concerned with issues of rebirth. What is surprising, though, is Shakespeare's use of it more as a figure of malignancy than of hope or well-being. If the dramatist's aim is to portray a native English myth reversed, then the image of the womb, deployed in inversion, may well work toward a planned end. This is not to deny the presence of more optimistic usage. At the outset, the word is a symbol of such healthy and regenerating honour that John Talbot frames his military duty in terms of it:

TALBOT. Shall all thy mother's hopes lie in one tomb?

JOHN. Ay, rather than I'll shame my mother's womb.

(1 Henry VI IV.v.34-5)

This is the heroic spirit of the English mythology. Yet, even here, we experience the disquiet of a tomb-womb rime, an association no more than aural at this point but one that is developed textually in the later stages of the quartet. By IV.i of Richard III, Shakespeare is ready to enact the most startling imagistic inversion. The Duchess of Gloucester speaks with thoughts of her evil son Richard in mind:

O my accursed womb, the bed of death!

A cockatrice hast thou hatch'd to the world,

Whose unavowed eye is murderous.

(IV.i.54-6)

The juxtaposition of what ought to be the archetypal life-force image of the "womb" and the bed of death, the tomb, represents a compelling departure from the notion of an ideal English mythology that is sustained by the rebirth of great acts and

famous monarchs. From the pedigree of the noble Duchess has sprung a beast of chilling malignancy. It is indicative of Shakespeare's developing dramatic art that Richard III, unlike its predecessors in the First Tetralogy, should sacrifice the dubious mechanism of indiscriminate Classical and Biblical reference to a more tutored, less effusive, approach to his task of articulating the anti-mythology. The image of the womb, as a metaphor for Richard's depravity in familial and national obligations, is both sustained and coherent:

The slave of nature and the son of hell,
Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb
(Marg. to Rich. I.iii.230-1)

O my accursed womb, the bed of death!
(Duchess IV.i.54)

From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death.
(Marg. to Duch. IV.iv.47-8)

That dog [Richard] . . .
Thy womb let loose to chase us to our graves.
(Marg. to Duch. IV.iv.49 & 54)

RICH. Who intercepts me in my expedition?

DUCH. O, she that might have intercepted thee,
By strangling thee in her accursed womb,
From all the slaughters, wretch, that thou hast done!
(IV.iv.136-9)

It is possible, even likely, that Shakespeare derives the idea of the womb as a tomb from The Mirror for Magistrates where, in the section devoted to King Henry VI, the king himself wishes: "Would God the grave had gript me in her greedy wombe, / Whan crowne in cradle made me king, with oyle of holy thombe."³⁶ The image has much in common with both the Duchess' bed of death and her regret that Richard did not die in her womb, but Shakespeare must be credited with developing the theme. Be this as it may, usage for which there seems to be no obvious precedent in the sources may be located in the final two womb

images of Richard III, both uttered by the king. In the first, Richard vows to Elizabeth

If I have kill'd the issue of your womb,
To quicken your increase I will beget
Mine issue of your blood upon your daughter.

(IV.iv.296-8)

And in the second:

ELIZ. Yet thou didst kill my children.

RICH. But in your daughter's womb I bury them;
Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed
Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.
(IV.iv.422-5. Emphasis added.)

Once heroic processes of revival are here strangely perverted. The womb becomes the expression of both life and death. But while Richard promises in each case that life will follow death, the progressions are decidedly unnatural. In the first instance, there is not the sense of a healthy and familial inheritance, of one generation bestowing its life upon the next. There is, rather, the feel of an all-seeing and an all-powerful Richard, presiding omnipotently over reproductive processes--wilfully destroying one generation, promising life to another. It is more a mechanism of substitution than of regeneration, and it becomes a thinly veiled idiom of the English mythology reversed, of the anti-mythology. In the second quotation, we are taken a step further. Burying the children of Elizabeth in her daughter's womb, Richard proposes a phoenix-like resurrection: "in that nest of spicery [the womb], they will breed / Selves of themselves." The king does not entirely dispense with the normal means of reproduction. When he says "in your daughter's womb I bury them," he makes it clear that he will be doing the "burying." This intriguing form of ejaculation again corrupts the concept of rebirth, and styles Richard as one who sows the seeds of death rather than of life. The English mythology's theme of heroic and splendid regeneration is now subsumed into the grotesque service of the anti-mythology. For the idea of the womb as a kind of

hermaphroditic breeding ground ("they will breed / Selves of themselves"), the figure of the phoenix is not an unusual choice, though its usage here may be considered untypical of the Tetralogy as a whole but no less indicative of the manner in which the typical processes of rebirth in the English myth are drawn into the degenerative cycle of the anti-mythology. Referred to by name rather than inference, and very powerfully linked with Shakespeare's Classical endeavours in the opening trilogy, the "phoenix" of the Henry VI plays is a quite different species to that of Richard III but no less instructive for an analysis of the continuing conflict between the mythological opposites.

In baptising Elizabeth in Henry VIII, Cranmer compares her to the maiden phoenix (V.v.39-47) who, though doomed to perish, yet promises the hope of monarchs to come. The use of the phoenix in the First Tetralogy is directed more towards the ends of heroic militarism than royal succession, but the connotations of "rebirth" are just as pertinent. This is how Lucy, addressing the French, speaks of the dead Talbot and his men:

from their ashes shall be rear'd

A phoenix that shall make all France afeard.

(1 Henry VI IV.vii.92-3)

And York, facing death at the hands of his foes, utters a curse of unnerving certainty:

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth

A bird that will revenge upon you all;

And in that hope I throw mine eyes to heaven,

Scorning whate'er you can afflict me with.

(3 Henry VI I.iv.35-8)

The respective ideas of "fear" and "revenge" in these two quotations may seem to lie in roughly the same emotive direction but the dramatist's intentions in each are very different. Lucy's allusion savours of the English mythology. The hope that an English military paradigm will rise to renew the feats of Talbot against the French and on foreign soil is well in

keeping with the precept of English heroic greatness renewing itself from generation to generation. What is disconcerting, though, is the apparent absence of any person capable of fulfilling that rôle. Lucy's idealism returns, in spirit, to the archetypal conquests of Edward III and Henry V in France but the spectre of civil war and mythological degeneration is so threatening, even in this the first play of the Tetralogy, that such idealism can find its only viable domain in the imagination. York's phoenix, by contrast, is a creature of terrifying reality. When we recall that his son, Richard III, will be his inheritor, the promise of revenge through his own succeeding generation assumes dimensions of cruelty and evil that outreach even his predictions. The metaphorical bird that will rise from the Duke's ashes will be the bird of bloody and unnatural civil dissent, passed on from one generation to the next--a bizarre distortion of the English mythology's natural reviving cycle. The notion of phoenix-type rebirth is thus doubly significant. On the one hand, it is Lucy's expression of the glorious English mythology and, on the other, it is a figure of the anti-mythology, a metaphor for the fast gathering evil of civil war.

Shakespeare may have gleaned a knowledge of the phoenix and its attributes from almost anywhere. Even so, on the evidence of the most obvious sources, his usage is unusual. Pliny³⁷ affirms that the bird exists, and links it with Arabia and spice trees. Despite the plays' obvious interest in horticultural imagery, it would be a fruitless endeavour to suggest any derivative significance in that direction! Nicolas Reusner has an emblem of a burning phoenix in his 1581 edition of Emblemata, and his print is accompanied by lines that relate the miraculous reviving bird to the religious theme of saintly martyrdom:

If men report true, death over again forms the Phoenix,
To this bird both life and death the same funeral pile
may prove.

Onward, executioners! of the saints burn ye the sainted
bodies;

For whom ye desire perdition, to them brings the flame
new birth.³⁸

Had York been endowed with altruistic qualities, and had Talbot suffered the same fate as Joan la Pucelle, Reusner's print and verse might well have merited consideration as the possible source of Shakespeare's usage. Finally, Geoffrey Whitney's verse addendum to his plate of the phoenix (copied from Les Devises Heroiques³⁹) purports to nothing more than a topical comparison of the phoenix to the town of Nampwiche which had burnt down and been rebuilt.⁴⁰ Whitney writes "bothe of the oulde, and newe" (p. 177). His theme can hardly be related to the details of the two phoenix citations in Shakespeare's Henry VI plays but it may provide us with a clue to a further interest the dramatist may have in the mythical bird. Certainly, it is useful as a metaphor for the ideas of heroic revival and unnatural resurrection already discussed. Perhaps less readily recognisable is the strange figurative affinity the phoenix has to the saga of Brutus and the New Troy. As the phoenix rises from the ashes of its predecessor, so, as legend had it, the New Troy of England rose from the ashes of the Old Troy of antiquity. The story, repeated by almost every Tudor chronicler, is a familiar theme in Elizabethan literature.⁴¹ Shakespeare never alludes to the Trojan Brutus in his plays, but in the Henry VI series (in 2 Henry VI at I.iii.43 and at III.ii.113; and in 3 Henry VI at III.iii.7 and 49) he uses the word "Albion" as a synonym for England. The name has a special link with the story of New Troy, and is used only twice elsewhere in the dramatist's works.⁴²

While the possibility of an association in Shakespeare's mind of the phoenix and New Troy can be no more than conjecture, the pre-eminence of the Classical story of Troy in the Henry VI plays is beyond question. The story of Troy appears to be the only sustained attempt at a Graeco-Roman parallel in the quartet. But, while almost every leading Greek or Trojan personage is mentioned somewhere in the Henry VI plays, not one is to be found in Richard III. Evidently, the reign of King Henry VI conjured up a particular vision of Trojan disaster in the mind

of the dramatist. It is not difficult to see why this should be so, for many superficial details of Henry's disastrous rule echo elements of the Troy saga. For example, Suffolk's mission to woo Margaret and bring her back to England to be Henry's queen is something similar to the rape of Helen, particularly when the love affair between Suffolk and his one-time captive blossoms later in the trilogy:

Thus Suffolk hath prevail'd; and thus he goes,
As did the youthful Paris once to Greece,
With hope to find the like event in love
But prosper better than the Trojan did.

(1 Henry VI V.v.103-6)

It is worth noting, as Gwyn Williams⁴³ has done in his paper "Suffolk and Margaret: A Study of Some Sections of Shakespeare's Henry VI," that the illicit relation between the two lovers is unhistorical. The whole account is apparently Shakespeare's invention, and, similarly, the use of Classical material here must also be original. Margaret, herself, evokes the notion of a queen brought from her native land and "imprisoned," as it were, within a city wall when, in describing the journey across the Channel to England, she remembers that she cast a jewel into the sea which received it, "And so I wish'd thy body [Henry's] might my heart" (2 Henry VI III.ii.109). In 3 Henry VI, Hastings makes explicit the protective rôle of the sea in the defence of the island from foreign invasion: "Let us be back'd with God, and with the seas / Which He hath giv'n for fence impregnable" (IV.i.43-4). The sense of the sea as a Trojan wall defending England is an idea that will be developed in the chapter on Richard II but, for the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient to understand the Trojan nuance simply as an element strengthening the Margaret-Helen association. Further such elements will be detected in the division of opinion amongst the nobles as to the desirability or otherwise of Margaret's presence in England (2 Henry VI I.i) which may be understood as something approaching the embittered wrangles amongst the Dardanian nobles over the presence of Helen in Troy, and in the manner in which the burning of Troy,

the direct result of Helen's presence there, is three times mentioned in 2 Henry VI, the play in which Margaret appears first and in which the most vociferous objections to her presence are raised. Bolingbroke recalls "The time of night when Troy was set on fire" (I.iv.17); Margaret talks of "burning Troy" (III.ii.118); and while Young Clifford's simile that he bears his father's body "As did Aeneas old Anchises bear" (V.ii.62) does not specifically refer to the burning of Troy, portrayals of Aeneas carrying his father Anchises in the emblem books or in books of illustrations are almost invariably backdropped by the burning ruins of the ancient city--as in Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias' Emblemas Morales (1591)⁴⁴ and in Antonio Tempesta's illustrations of Ovid's Metamorphoses.⁴⁵

In all fairness, though, Margaret's relation to Helen of Troy cannot be pressed to any great extreme. Though Michael Quinn⁴⁶ sees her advent as the "original sin" of the Tetralogy, her presence is surely less to blame for England's demise than is religious Henry's inability to command a disintegrating kingdom. Edward bluntly disavows the Helen link, but for very different reasons:

Helen of Greece was fairer far than thou,
 Although thy husband may be Menelaus;
 And ne'er was Agamemnon's brother wrong'd
 By that false woman as this king by thee.

(3 Henry VI II.ii.146-9)

Menelaus indeed! George Puttenham, in The Arte of English Poesie (1589), holds, as axiomatic, the "prudence of Menelaus."⁴⁷ Edward's comparison is no less cryptic than Margaret's odd inference, in 2 Henry VI, that Henry dissembles like Aeneas (III.ii.115). Nonetheless, Edward's "de-mythologisation" of the Margaret-Helen association exemplifies a technique of some significance deployed by several other characters in the First Tetralogy as a strategy of degradation. In 1 Henry VI, the Countess of Auvergne denies her mortal foe, Talbot, his right to equation with Hercules and Hector (II.iii.19-20), describing him, instead, as "a weak and writhled shrimp" (II.iii.23);

Joan la Pucelle is taunted by her English captors with the accusation that, far from being divinely conceived, she is the daughter of a humble peasant (1 Henry VI V.iv); in the second of the Henry VI plays, to Suffolk's claim that Jove sometimes disguised himself as he does now, the Lieutenant threatens that "Jove was never slain, as thou shalt be" (IV.i.49); Clifford, in 2 Henry VI, assails the myth-like stature that the bogus mythist Jack Cade would claim for himself by asking, derisively, "Is Cade the son of Henry the Fifth, / That thus you do exclaim you'll go with him" (IV.viii.33-4); York's insistence, again in 2 Henry VI, that the golden crown "must round engirt these brows of mine" (V.i.99) is very well remembered by Queen Margaret in the next play when she forces her captive to wear a paper crown (I.iv); and, in Richard III, Richard urges Buckingham to sully the honour of Edward's heirs by inferring their bastardy (III.v.75). The devaluation of mythic worth is a motif to which future chapters will look for further significance.

Hector is the Trojan hero most frequently alluded to in the Henry VI plays. In the first, as we have seen, the Countess of Auvergne notices, of Talbot,

I thought I should have seen some Hercules,
A second Hector for his grim aspect
(II.iii.19-20)

A messenger in 3 Henry VI here describes the death of York:

Environed he was with many foes,
And stood against them as the hope of Troy
Against the Greeks that would have ent'red Troy.
But Hercules himself must yield to odds
(II.i.50-3)

And, in the same play, King Henry bids farewell to Clifford with the words:

Farewell, my Hector and my Troy's true hope.
(IV.viii.25)

The Elizabethan acquaintance with the story of Troy, as the critic

Kenneth Muir⁴⁸ has indicated in a recent Shakespeare Summer School lecture, was more likely to have been indebted to Virgil than to Homer. This, we might suppose, explains why Shakespeare refers to Hector in the second quotation as "the hope of Troy" (the phrase derives from The Aeneid: "O lux Dardaniae! spes O fidissima Teucrum!"⁴⁹) without feeling the need to mention the hero by name. The character of Hector in Troilus and Cressida is in keeping with the Virgilian vision of a consummate warrior, as are the two secondary Tudor sources with which Shakespeare may well have been familiar. William Caxton's translation of Raoul LeFevre's The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye claims that "This hector was moche coragyou. stronge. and victoryous in batayll / and a right wyse conduytour of men in Armes,"⁵⁰ and John Lydgate's Troy Book⁵¹ also styles Hector as a warrior archetype. As regards the emblem genre, at least one writer sees the Trojan paradigm in a similar light:

Le preux Hector, le beau Paris de Troie
 Louent tous deux de harpe armonieuse
 Hector semond à guerre furieuse,
 Et Paris quiert esbat, soulas, et ioye.⁵²

And it is certainly the way in which the Countess, the Messenger and the King conceive of Hector.

However, it does not seem implausible to suggest that the dramatist could also have been familiar with the Hector of The Iliad, having available to him the English translation of A. Hall published in ten books by R. Newberrie in 1581 (London).⁵³ And The Iliad portrays Hector as not only a fabulous knight capable of feats of exceptional military prowess but also as an archetypal father figure--a man, as Paul Harvey puts it, "of human affections, devoted to wife and child"⁵⁴ and not just a soldier. R.K. Root may be over-simplifying in arguing that, in the Henry VI plays, Hector is "a mere name, a type of martial prowess."⁵⁵ It is intriguing that each of the three "Hectors" Shakespeare presents us with can boast a degree of familial affection that must be considered unusual given the peculiar family dislocations of the Tetralogy as a whole. Fathers kill their sons, and sons kill their fathers (3 Henry VI

II.v); the weak King Henry surrenders his son's right to the throne in an action that even he admits is unnatural (3 Henry VI, I.i.192-3); in Richard III, Edward has his own brother executed, and Richard coldly conspires to the same end (II.i) and goes on to order the execution of his own nephews at IV.ii.18-19. By contrast, the bonds between Talbot, York, and Clifford and their respective progeny, each tested and steeled by grim Death itself, stamp themselves powerfully on the fabric of the drama. Talbot would willingly give his own life that his son might live (1 Henry VI IV.v). In 3 Henry VI, York's grief at the death of Rutland (I.iv.147) is as profound as is his pride in the way his sons demeaned themselves in battle (I.iv.8). And when Young Clifford carries away his father's body "As did Aeneas old Anchises bear" (2 Henry VI V.ii.62), he draws on a Classical anecdote popular in the emblem books as a good representation of family loyalty and devotion.

In his use of the figure of Hector as an illustration of military superlative and, as has been argued, of kinship, the dramatist may be moving with more subtlety in these plays than some critics believe.⁵⁶ It is intriguing, and a little worrying, that in two of the Hector allusions (those pertaining to Talbot and York) the dramatist chooses to refer to Hercules as well. This is not as incongruous as it may seem at first. LeFevre's French edition of The Recuyell⁵⁷ has a woodcut of Deianira giving a kneeling Lichas the shirt poisoned with the blood of Nessus. And Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne,⁵⁸ in Emblemata, list an emblem in which Hercules is related to Trojan heroes. Certainly, some attempt is made to work out an Herculean identity for Talbot (he is linked a second time with Hercules when Lucy calls him "the great Alcides of the field" at IV.vii.60) and we might argue that Shakespeare intends some kind of parallel Hectorian and Herculean identification--a man, on the one hand, as bonded to his son as Hector was to his family, and, on the other, as betrayed and conquered by the treachery of his allies and the guile of a woman as was Hercules by the unfortunate Lichas and the shirt he bore from Deianira. Similarly, when the Messenger describes York's death at the hands of Margaret

(significantly, though Clifford, Northumberland and the Prince of Wales were present at the execution, it is Margaret's rôle he emphasises), he compares York to the hope of Troy and then concedes tellingly

But Hercules himself must yield to odds;
And many strokes, though with a little axe,
Hews down and fells the hardest-timber'd oak

(3 Henry VI II.i.53-5)

This allusion to Hercules relates to a proverb "Ne Hercules quidem contra duos," explained by Erasmus in Proverbs or Adages (1569 translation): "Not Hercules against two, that is to saye: Though a man neuer so muche excelleth other in strengthe, yet it will be hard for him to matche two and mo at ones. And one man may lawfully giue place to a multitude."⁵⁹ The vision of York forced to stand upon a mole hill (I.iv.67), made to wear a paper crown (line 95) and derided by Margaret, might almost seem an oblique reference to Hercules' subjugation at the mannish hands of Omphale, herself a queen. There is some evidence to suggest that Shakespeare's intentions stretch beyond a merely proverbial level towards this Omphalean connotation. Margaret's femininity is questioned on many occasions in 3 Henry VI: Richard calls her a "woman's general" at I.ii.68, York says she is "ill-beseeming" of her sex at I.iv.113, George refers to her as "Captain Margaret" at II.vi.75, Margaret herself declares that "I am ready to put armour on" (III.iii.230), and, at V.v.23-4, Richard sneers at her in wishing "That you might still have worn the petticoat / And ne'er have stol'n the breech from Lancaster." The Hercules-Omphale entanglement appears to be a promising equation, applicable not only to York but also to King Henry who is never referred to as Hercules. Such ideas, though, may claim only inferential value since, so often, Shakespeare undermines his own Classical credibility by allowing himself to be lured into tempting "local" parallels whose variety does nothing to enhance the cohesion and the sustained significance of his mythology. Talbot's flirtation with Hector and Hercules seems defensible, even attractive,

but how do we accommodate his further association with Daedalus in IV.vi and vii, or with Nero at I.iv.95? So, too, York looks like a promising hybrid of Hector and Hercules, but, if so, why does Shakespeare go on to confuse him with Ajax (2 Henry VI V.i.26) and with Achilles (2 Henry VI V.i.100)?

When we talk of the use of Trojan myth in the Henry VI plays, the inconsistencies of detail enable us to speak, with assurance, of only a feel of the saga of Troy. That, of itself, is useful. It gives the Tetralogy, as a whole, an overriding sense of predestined tragedy. There is humour in Henry's cry to Clifford, "Farewell, my Hector and my Troy's true hope," but a humour that moves always against the dark backdrop of imminent disaster. Henry is no Priam, and his regime no splendid Troy. But he shares with his illustrious predecessor a common human pathos, and his order faces a destruction as certain, if not as memorable or as absolute, as that faced by the ancient city itself. And when Gloucester (later King Richard III) seeks a suitable metaphor for his own secretive ambitions, he imagines himself as some scheming Grecian plotting the demise of Troy:

I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.

(3 Henry VI III.ii.188-90)

All this to gain the crown of England and build a new and a sinister world from the ashes of the old. The specific identity is not fixed, absolute, or even important. A Nestor, a Ulysses, a Sinon--Richard will be whoever or whatever he has to be in order to achieve his objective. Often outrageous and frequently inconsistent, the Tetralogy's Troy references endeavour to point us in general directions. It would be wrong to suggest that their implications are entirely unwholesome. While the sense of imminent doom is relevant to the immediate circumstances of Henry VI's predicament and Richard's impending rise to power, the Elizabethans would also have seen the fall of Troy as the unfortunate, but necessary, event that brought about the birth

of their own great New Troy. In this way, the elements of the Dardanian myth contribute to the now familiar "two-way" mechanism of the English mythology and the anti-mythology. In one sense, they signal death, decay and destruction, and, in another, they offer the hope of a second Troy, of an English paradise on earth, in which the glories of former times will be born again.

The First Tetralogy

Notes

¹ Plutarch, The philosophie, commonlie called, the morales, trans. Philemon Holland (A. Hatfield, 1603), explanation of words.

² William Camden, Britain, or A Chorographicall Description Of The Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, trans. Philemon Holland (1610, first publ.; F. Kingston, R. Young and J. Legatt for A. Heb, 1637), I, 207 (marginal note).

³ Quoted by Andrew S. Cairncross, ed., The First Part of King Henry VI, 3rd ed. (1962; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), p. xxix.

⁴ For a discussion of the authorship question see Cairncross, ed., The First Part of King Henry VI, pp. xxviii-xxxvii.

⁵ Rich makes this retrospective remark in Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession (J. Kingston for R. Walley, 1581), sig. B1^v.

⁶ Edward Surtz, ed., Utopia (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 23. The first edition of Utopia (a Latin version) was printed on the continent in 1516. An English translation appeared in 1551.

⁷ Sir Walter Raleigh: Selections from his Writings, edited with an introduction and notes, by G.E. Hadow (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917), p. 90. The extract is from The Historie of the World (1614, first publ.).

⁸ A Restitvtion of Decayed Intelligence In antiquities. Concerning the most noble and renowned English nation (Antwerp: Robert Bruney, 1605), p. 56 (gloss).

⁹ Argol is here writing in a prefatory address to the reader in Gerard Leigh's (sometimes Legh) The Accedence of Armorie (1562, first publ.; R. Tottel, 1591), sig. A5^v.

¹⁰ The British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth, 2nd ed., rev.

and cor. by J.A. Giles (James Bohn, 1842), p. xix. Thompson makes the remark in his original 1718 translation.

¹¹ Cairncross, ed., The First Part of King Henry VI, note to I.ii.33

¹² For a concise history of Orlando/Roland, see Ivor H. Evans' revised edition of Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, centenary ed. (1970; rpt. Cassell, 1977), p. 927.

¹³ "King Arthur and Politics," Speculum, 2 (1927), 33-51.

¹⁴ Susan Snyder, ed., The Divine Weekes And Works of Guillaume de Saluste Sieur Du Bartas (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979), II, 886, cites the poem (1605 ed., sig. A2^v) in which it occurs.

¹⁵ Lamentations for the death of the late Illustrious Prince Henry: and the dissolution of his religious Familie (Tho. Snodham for R. Jackson, 1613), dedication leaf.

¹⁶ The Pastyme of the People. The Chronycles of dyuers realmys and most specyally of the realme of England (J. Rastell, 1530), sigs. C5^r-D3^r.

¹⁷ Chronycles of Englande (St. Albans: 1483), pp. 186^r-227^v. The pagination has been pencilled in, perhaps after a more recent rebinding of the volume.

¹⁸ The Practise, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes, described out of the doings of most valiant and expert Captaines, and confirmed both by ancient, and moderne examples, and praecedents (deputies of Christopher Barker, 1593), sig. B3^r.

¹⁹ The Trve Vse of Armorie, Shewed by Historie, and plainly proued by example (J. Jackson for Gabriell Cawood, 1592), p. 29.

²⁰ Rastell, The Pastyme of the People, sig. C6^v.

²¹ Oddly enough, while Sutcliffe's military treatise praises Edward's reign, there is no mention of the Order of the Garter.

²² Leigh, The Accedence of Armorie, fol. 132^v.

²³ Wyrley, The Trve Vse of Armorie, p. 33.

²⁴ A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586),

p. 195.

²⁵ In a passage from Hall's work cited by Cairncross, ed., The First Part of King Henry VI, p. 138.

²⁶ Sutcliffe, The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes, sig. B3^r.

²⁷ In 1 Henry VI, the allusions appear at IV.ii.55 ("God and Saint George, Talbot and England's right") and IV.vi.1 ("Saint George and victory!"). 3 Henry VI has references at II.i.204 ("God and Saint George for us!"), at II.ii.80 ("Unsheathe your sword, good father; cry 'Saint George!'"), at IV.ii.29 ("For Warwick and his friends, God and Saint George!"), and at V.i.113 ("Lords, to the field; Saint George and victory!"). And we may cite three such examples from Richard III: at V.iii.270 ("God and Saint George! Richmond and victory!"), at V.iii.301 ("This, and Saint George to boot!"), and at V.iii.349 ("Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George").

²⁸ See Hardin Craig, "Morality Plays and Elizabethan Drama," Shakespeare Quarterly, 1 (1950), 64-72; and Michael Quinn, "Providence in Shakespeare's Yorkist Plays," Shakespeare Quarterly, 10 (1959), 45-52.

²⁹ As does Cairncross, ed., The First Part of King Henry VI, note to II.v.116.

³⁰ The Bible: That Is, The Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament (Robert Barker, 1603). This is the Geneva version.

³¹ H.C. Hart, ed., The Third Part of Henry VI, 1st ed. (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1909), note to II.i.74.

³² H.C. Hart, ed., The Third Part of Henry VI, note to II.i.74.

³³ Emblemes (printed for J. Williams, and sold by William Grantham, 1634), pp. 284-6.

³⁴ "Fathers and Sons in the Henry VI plays," Shakespeare Quarterly, 13 (1962), p. 489.

35 Michael Quinn also uses the words "original sin" in his paper "Providence in Shakespeare's Yorkist Plays," p. 48.

36 The modern edition used is that of Lily B. Campbell (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1960), p. 213. The earliest edition of the Mirror (written by William Baldwin, et al.) is believed to have appeared in 1555.

37 The Secrets and Wonders of the Worlde. A Booke Ryght rare and straunge, contayning many excellent properties, giuen to Man, Beastes, Foules, Fishes, and Serpents, Trees and Plants, translated out of P. de Changy's French abridgement by I.A. (1566, trans. first publ.; T. Hacket, 1587), sig. E4^v.

38 Quoted and translated by Henry Green, Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers (Trübner & Co., 1870), p. 385.

39 Les Devises Heroiques, De M. Claude Paradin, Chanoine de Beaujeu. Du Seigneur Gabriel Symeon (Anvers: C. Plantin, 1561).

40 Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes, p. 177.

41 It was a common practice amongst dramatists of the day to refer to London as New Troy or Troynovant--in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, Greene gives Bacon these lines:

I find by deep prescience of mine art,
Which once I tempered in my secret cell,
That here where Brute did build his Troynovant,
From forth the royal garden of a king
Shall flourish out so rich and fair a bud,
Whose brightness shall deface proud Phoebus' flower,
And over-shadow Albion with her leaves.

The text used is that in John Gassner's Bantam collection Elizabethan Drama (New York: Bantam World Drama edition, 1967), scene xvi (p. 229). Similarly, The Mirror for Magistrates (ed. Lily B. Campbell) mentions Brute twice (p. 122 and p. 123) without feeling compelled to explain his significance to the reader. Though originally published before Elizabeth's reign began, the Mirror was both influential and popular in Shakespeare's era.

42 For the use of "Albion" in relation to the Trojan Brutus story, see Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Britonum, ed. J.A. Giles (D. Nutt, 1844). G.H. Gerould, in his article "King Arthur and Politics" (p. 34), believes that Geoffrey issued his history between 1136 and 1138.

43 "Suffolk and Margaret: A Study of Some Sections of Shakespeare's Henry VI," Shakespeare Quarterly, 25 (1974), 310-22.

44 Emblemas Morales (1589, first publ.; En Segouia: Impresso por Juan de la Cuesta, 1591), p. 232^F.

45 Metamorphoseon Sive Transformationvm Ovidianarvm Libri Qvindecim (1606; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), plate 126.

46 "Providence in Shakespeare's Yorkist Plays," pp. 47-8.

47 G.D. Willcock and A. Walker, eds., The Arte of English Poesie (1598, first publ.; Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), p. 4.

48 The point was made during a lecture at The Hill, in Stratford-upon-Avon, July 1980.

49 T.H.D. May, ed. and trans., The Aeneid of Virgil (George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1930), p. 65.

50 H.O. Sommer, ed., The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye (D. Nutt, 1894), II. 578.

51 Mark Sacharoff, in his paper "The Traditions of the Troy-Story Heroes and the Problem of Satire in Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Studies, 6 (1970), remarks that "Hector is without doubt the peerless heroic figure in the Troy Book" (p. 127).

52 Cited by Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, eds., Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst Des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), col. 1682.

53 Ten books of Homers Iliades, translated out of the French by A. Hall (R. Newberie, 1581). Hall's translation is in verse.

54 The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature (1937; rpt.

Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 196.

⁵⁵ Classical Mythology in Shakespeare (1903; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1965), p. 69.

⁵⁶ This is not to deny that Shakespeare's usage of mythic figures is at times inconsistent and confusing. M.C. Bradbrook's cautious generalization in The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Chatto and Windus, 1963) seems right: "His early plays, Titus Andronicus, Henry VI, and Richard III, The Comedy of Errors and Two Gentlemen of Verona, are heavily rhetorical, and make some parade of both fashion and learning" (p. 60).

⁵⁷ The Warburg Institute, University of London, catalogues this print under "Hercules" and indicates the print is on fol. 203^r in a 1495 ed. in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

⁵⁸ Henkel and Schöne, eds., Emblemata, column 1644.

⁵⁹ Proverbs or Adages, ed. DeWitt T. Starnes (1569; facsimile rpt. Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), pp. 16^v-17^r.

King John

In pursuing the ideas of mythology and anti-mythology in King John, and arguing for the retention and development of themes first stated in the Yorkist Tetralogy, differences in historical material are of importance. The issues of foreign conquest and civil war, clear and well-defined in relation to the myth and anti-myth in the preceding quartet, are much less certain in King John. Not only does the great military quest of the play hinge, somewhat degradingly, on the repulsion of an invader rather than on triumph abroad but the mechanism of heroic rebirth is complicated and, to some degree, confused by the presence of a king who has usurped the crown and of a rightful child heir who is undesirably sponsored by the French.

While this chapter accepts the contention of Peter Alexander¹ and E.A.J. Honigsmann² that Shakespeare's King John was written before The Troublesome Raigne of King John, it is still worth noting that, in at least the question of usurpation, the latter largely avoids the problems of divided moral loyalties by adopting a stronger line on John's right to the throne.³ That this was the standard Tudor view of the monarch we may infer from John R. Elliot's paper "Shakespeare and the Double Image of King John," in which Elliot argues that, as "a result of Bale's work, and of that of Grafton and Foxe, John became firmly identified with a set of religious-political doctrines that were at the heart of official Tudor policy: hatred of the Pope, obedience to the King, resistance to foreign intervention, and intolerance of all forms of civil dissension. Indeed, John became the standard symbol for English Protestant writers of the patriot-martyr."⁴ If we look to the Elizabethan historians, we find Elliot's statement vindicated by one of Shakespeare's more familiar sources. Holinshed describes John as a man who "had a princely heart in him and wanted but faithful subjects to have wroken himself of such wrongs as were done and offered to him."⁵ Only John Stow, in Annales, or, A Generall Chronicle

of England, follows Polydore Vergil's Anglica Historia⁶ in calling John a usurper who, "after the death of his brother Richard, took on him the kingdom disinheriting his nephews Arthur and Elianor the true heirs."⁷ Stow's pejorative intent is clear, and just as obvious is Shakespeare's insistence on the questionable nature of John's monarchy. As evidence of this, and since William H. Matchett⁸ has already detailed the various inferences of guilt, we may look solely to Queen Elinor's retort of "Your strong possession much more than your right" (I.i.40) and Faulconbridge's prediction of the "imminent decay of wrested pomp" (IV.iii.154).

While many critics⁹ have remarked upon the structural weaknesses of the play, with Chambers' description of it as a "bit of hack work"¹⁰ the most caustic, few have fully acknowledged the purposely experimental character of King John. The rejection of a popular Tudor lore is, of itself, indicative of the dramatist's conscious desire for experimentation not simply in terms of moral ambiguities but also, to the more immediate relevance of this chapter, in terms of the English mythology and its antithesis. Controlling a host of contradictory motifs and adapting them to the schemata of English mythology and anti-mythology presents difficulties that demand not just a review of material used in the First Tetralogy but selective omission and innovation as well. The following grouping of figures is a tentative suggestion of Shakespeare's mythological plan in King John: (i) the resurrection motif, (ii) the "soul" and "devil" images, (iii) the ideas of enclosure and penetration, and (iv) the theme of the myth-hero.

The concept of a greatness resurrecting itself in the life of another can be detected in King John, and one of the first significant examples appears to lie within the bounds of heroic militarist rebirth. Arthur talks to one of his foreign patrons:

God shall forgive you Coeur-de-lion's death
The rather that you give his offspring life,
Shadowing their right under your wings of war.

(II.i.12-14)

King Philip of France lays great emphasis on the boy's rôle as

inheritor. Addressing his claims to the English King, he says of Arthur: "Look here upon thy brother Geffrey's face: / These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his" (II.i.99-100) and, a line later, "This little abstract doth contain that large / Which died in Geffrey." Philip argues that his protégé has the inborn potential to evolve towards equation with Geffrey: "the hand of time / Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume" (II.i.102-3). This notion of "growth" relates to a physical transition from childhood to manhood, and to a progressive development of heroic stature. The image of family inheritance becomes a metaphor for both.

Such ideas may appear to be healthy enough but, in truth, the reviving process of the English mythology comes under a double attack in this scene. Firstly, John has, to use the French King's words, "Cut off the sequence of posterity" (II.i.96) in usurping the crown. Secondly, the French have taken it upon themselves to effect reparation for this misdemeanour--hardly a satisfactory advertisement for the inviolate autonomy of the English realm. The first of the two seems less damnable. True, Shakespeare makes more of John's usurpation than most of the Elizabethan chronicle sources. But there is not the feeling that the usurpation has triggered some vast and irreversible cycle of catastrophe. It is the pretext for but not the cause of French aggression. In a way that the First Tetralogy does not, King John lacks the sense of a specific moral evil that precipitates a corresponding national decline. On the other hand, while Arthur's title to the crown is unchallenged, his means of effecting that right (the French army and nobility) is not unimpeachable. In practical terms, therefore, his claim falls into something of a quandary, and Shakespeare's drama is obliged to prefer the usurpative reign of John to Arthur's French backed putsch. On reconsidering the boy's request to Austria, that preference becomes clear:

God shall forgive you Coeur-de-lion's death
The rather that you give his offspring life,
Shadowing their right under your wings of war.

Compare this with Richard's promise to Elizabeth in Richard III:

ELIZ. Yet thou didst kill my children.

RICH. But in your daughter's womb I bury them;
Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed
Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.

(IV.iv.422-5)

In both instances the processes of rebirth, of life from death, have unnaturally fallen under the auspices of forces whose influence may be deemed inconsistent with the precepts of the English mythology. Richard's wicked machinations wholly debase the notion of revival, and Arthur's appeal for "life" to the very man who ought to be, and is, the archetypal enemy of the English mythology similarly abuses the heroic ideal. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that subsequent images of life from death linked with the boy Arthur are subject to grotesque perversions. This is how Constance slanders Elinor:

 this is thy eldest son's son,
Inf fortunate in nothing but in thee.
Thy sins are visited in this poor child;
The canon of the law is laid on him,
Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

(II.i.177-82)

E.A.J. Honigmann¹¹ makes the point, in the Arden edition of the play, that Constance alludes to Exodus xx.5: "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."¹² Hebraic material is pressed, by Shakespeare, into the service of the anti-mythology, with the concept of resurrection adjusted into a vision of repetitive misfortune, and the image of the "womb," as in Richard III, perverted into a figure of rank malignancy. So, too, when Arthur faces death at the hands of Hubert de Burgh, he begs that one of his unwilling executioners be allowed to return: "Let him come back, that his compassion may / Give life to yours" (IV.i.89-90, emphasis added). And that gruesome nuance is reworked a few lines later when, looking at a burning coal cooling, Hubert

threatens: "But with my breath I can revive it, boy" (IV.i.112). The images of rebirth and revival familiarly used by Shakespeare to articulate some of the elements of the English mythology, as in the Yorkist Tetralogy, are lured into macabre service. It is ironically left to the English King himself to confirm the complete inversion of the heroic resurrection theme:

They burn in indignation. I repent.

There is no sure foundation set on blood,

No certain life achiev'd by others' death.

(IV.ii.103-5 Emphasis added.)

Adrien Bonjour accepts these lines as "John's repentance."¹³ If so, such repentance falls far short of redemption. John effects the most callous politicisation of Arthur's "murder," lamenting not the act itself, but the failure of the act to manoeuvre him out of his present difficulties. Starting with Arthur's apparently glorious appeal to his Coeur-de-lion ancestry, the image of life from death is, at last, subverted into the grim domain of Machiavellian expediency.

William H. Matchett has observed that "the memory of Coeur-de-lion haunts this play as the mythically heightened image of a good and heroic king."¹⁴ Lacking the concatenation of propitious circumstance and strength, both physical and moral, Arthur's pedigree is of little avail against the dark machinations of the anti-mythology. The Bastard Faulconbridge is a man of sterner stuff. It is of significance that all the references to Coeur-de-lion in the opening scene of the play appertain to him. The whole movement of the scene rests on the mechanism that sees him materially disinherit himself on the one hand so that he can inherit the heroic honour of Coeur-de-lion ancestry on the other. This encapsulates the very ideal of English military resurrection. But whereas 1 Henry VI and succeeding plays in the First Tetralogy take as their great military and moral exemplars the feats and lives of Edward III and Henry V, King John, for reasons of historical anachronism, is in no position to do the same. The dramatist appears to have been interested enough in the case of the Bastard to deviate from the norm set by the earlier quartet

and experiment with the name and reputation of a different historical paradigm. Emphasis on Faulconbridge's Ricardian "inheritance" is not powerfully sustained beyond Act One, though his fervent antipathy to Austria, the slayer of the Lionheart, in subsequent acts may be construed as lying in a comparable direction. Nonetheless, if we are searching for a "myth-hero" in King John, Faulconbridge, as son of the great Coeur-de-lion, is the most obvious choice, and a fuller examination of his potential in that respect will be left to the last phase of this chapter.

The unfortunate shadow cast over the revival theme linked with Arthur is only inverse and circumstantial evidence of Shakespeare's continuing concern in King John with the issues of the English mythology expressed in the First Tetralogy. If we are to argue for a coherent attempt to develop and define motifs of that mythology, we must look for much more positive demonstration of its presence. The heady patriotic atmosphere of the final act seems a likely place to initiate the search. The Bastard addresses the body of his king:

Art thou gone so? I do but stay behind
To do the office for thee of revenge,
And then my soul shall wait on thee to heaven,
As it on earth hath been thy servant still.

(V.vii.70-3)

Although the desire for death is contradicted thirty lines later (V.vii.103-5), the use of the word "soul" at line 72 is of some interest. In Biblical terms, as we saw in the previous chapter, there is a clear distinction between the physical humanity of this world and the spirituality of the next. The soul is in one a prisoner and in the other a free agent. As Théodore de Bèze puts it, "L'homme né libre aussi de mort tombe en servage, / Puis, deliuré par Christ, vole au ciel sa maison."¹⁵ It is intriguing that Faulconbridge should pledge the allegiance of his own soul to the English King and not to God. Earthly monarchy, it seems, still commands prestige and loyalty in ethereal climes, contrary to the emblematic tradition of death as a universal leveller, of which Israel de Mecken's fifteenth

century print of "La mort surprenant un empereur"¹⁶ may be considered typical. Interesting, as well, is the way in which the Bastard imagines the easy transition of his soul from earthly to heavenly service (line 72). There is no sense of life's unwholesome bondage followed by death's merciful release. His immortal part relates, in terminology, to the Biblical afterworld, but adheres, in connotation, to a vision of English duty in an anglicised heaven.

Paulconbridge's re-interpretation of Biblical nomenclature is given emphasis by two earlier and openly conventional references to the "soul." Her son deprived of the English throne and her only allies swayed towards a peace pact with King John, Constance is described in this way:

Look, who comes here! a grave unto a soul;
Holding th' eternal spirit against her will,
In the vile prison of afflicted breath.

(III.iv.17-19)

And this is John with a plan to murder Arthur in the back of his mind:

Come hither, Hubert. O my gentle Hubert,
We owe thee much! Within this wall of flesh
There is a soul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage means to pay thy love

(III.iii.19-22)

Both examples fall within the defined precinct of an Hebraic scheme of the fallen world. The idea of Constance's soul trapped in the "grave" of her mortal body is a common feature of Elizabethan literature. John's soul, drafted, as it is, into the service of pure evil, is no less conventional but looks for its origins as much to the iconographical fashions of the Renaissance as to the dramatic traditions of the morality play. It is almost as though the English King has made some Faustian pact with the devil, and sells his soul into infamy in the hope of retaining power. Diego Valades, in *Rhetorica Christiana*¹⁷ (1579), exemplifies the notion visually by picturing a devil and an angel vying for the soul of a burdened man. Both offer

a chair, but the devil's is close by and the angel's far off in the sky. Commensurate with the Biblical scheme of the Fall, Shakespeare appears to stress the significance of John's demise, not as king of England, but as a simple man whose soul, on the path to physical death, falls under the sway, at various times, of both good and evil impulses. If we sought a less florid explanation of this, we might look to N. Ling's Politeuphuia. Wits Commonwealth (1597) where Virtue is defined as "a disposition and power of the reasonable part of the soule, which bringeth into order and decencie the vnreasonable part, by causing it to propound a couenient end to her owne affections and passions: whereby the soule abideth in a comely and decent habit, executing that which ought to be done according to reason."¹⁸ In terms of Elizabethan theology, then, the deterioration of John's soul is unfortunate but not unusual.

The play's soul motif, we might conclude, tends to establish itself within the canon of sixteenth century Biblical interpretation. Yet, the Bastard's variation of the theme moves far enough away from the norm to be of significance to Shakespeare's manipulation of "soul" in Richard II. And a second example reveals, as well, the promise of things to come. Faulconbridge eulogises the dead Arthur:

How easy dost thou take all England up!
 From forth this morsel of dead royalty
 The life, the right, and truth of all this realm
 Is fled to heaven; and England now is left
 To tug and scramble, and to part by th' teeth
 The unowed interest of proud-swelling state.
 Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty
 Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest
 And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace

(IV.iii.142-150)

The Arden editor rejects Theobald's emendation at lines 142-3, preferring to retain the "?" (= "!") of the first folio at the end of line 143 and arguing that the "idea of England taken up From forth Arthur's body parallels that of his soul fled to heaven (from his body)."¹⁹ The parallel is a useful one for,

in the death of Arthur, Faulconbridge clearly seeks some kind of national significance. England's soul has "fled to heaven" leaving only a carcass, a lifeless body, to be picked at by predators. There is some preparation for the vast consequences the Bastard would here attach to the boy's death. Constance, speaking of the ill-fated Arthur an act earlier, had afforded us an Hebraic premonition of the coming atrocity: "For since the birth of Cain, the first male child, / To him that did but yesterday suspire, / There was not such a gracious creature born" (III.iv.79-81). Salisbury terms the alleged crime "the crest, or crest unto the crest, / Of murder's arms" (IV.iii.46-7) and, to Pembroke, "All murders past do stand excus'd in this" (IV.iii.51). These allusions aspire towards the idea of a second Fall, of a Biblically delineated anti-mythology, and yet stop short of it. John's moral blame in instigating the "crime" is beyond question but the act never lives up to the rhetorical crescendo that follows in its wake. This is partly because Arthur's death is accidental and partly because the instability of John's character, veering from extreme evil to pitiful helplessness, tends to mitigate our condemnation of him. But perhaps more telling is the marked absence of a paradise/paradise lost vision in the drama into which the idea of a second Fall might fit. In having Faulconbridge expound the equation of Arthur as England's soul irrevocably lost, Shakespeare indulges himself in an extravagance of rhetoric that can in no substantial way be vindicated by the evidence of the text. Ironically, it is the defeat of Arthur's one time patrons that provides the nationalistic fillip at the end of the work and leaves us with the sense that England yet retains the ability to rejuvenate a greatness that has sagged through so much of John's reign.

Nonetheless, the Bastard's free-travelling soul, serving its king on earth and in an Englished heaven, and Arthur's soul as a metaphor for all that is good in the body politic of England both suggest a peculiar "anglicisation" of a Biblical figure. The use of the image of the "soul" in this way is without clear precedent in the First Tetralogy's perception of

the English mythology, and may contribute to a developing scheme of that mythology in which Biblical terminology is adapted into a native heroic context. A further manifestation of this movement can be deciphered in the compelling link, advanced in King John, between Faulconbridge and the devil:

LADY FAULC. Hast thou denied thyself a Faulconbridge?

BASTARD. As faithfully as I deny the devil.

(I.i.251-2)

AUSTRIA

What the devil art thou?

BASTARD. One that will play the devil, sir, with you

(II.i.134-5)

Now, by my life, this day grows woodrous hot;

Some airy devil hovers in the sky

And pours down mischief.

(III.ii.1-3)

Put up thy sword betime;

Or I'll so maul you and your toasting-iron

That you shall think the devil is come from hell.

(IV.iii.98-100)

That misbegotten devil, Faulconbridge,

In spite of spite alone upholds the day.

(V.iv.4-5)

Lily B. Campbell, in Shakespeare's "Histories", has recorded, of the Bastard: "In the plot he is only important as was the vice in the old moralities, in pricking others on to action."²⁰ Campbell stops short of actually calling Faulconbridge a vice figure, though the implication is not invisible. Julia C. Van de Water takes the final step when, in rejecting critical praise of the Bastard's rôle as hero in King John, she asserts: "How much closer to the truth it would be to say that Faulconbridge is really only a slightly concealed 'vice'. He bubbles over with wit and merriment; he is prone to tease and scoff; he is the medium of the comic aside; and he provides cynical commentary on the action. . . . These are the very attributes of the vice as he had developed and mellowed in English comedy."²¹ By way

of contrast, Middleton Murry calls him "this insular, magnificent hero" and argues that he "has no need of virtue, because he has no vice to conceal."²² E.M.W. Tillyard dismisses the import of the Bastard's second soliloquy on Commodity (II.i.561-98) by asserting that Faulconbridge "has the English fear of being too openly serious and righteous; and this declaration is no more a sign of his being really corrupt than his later interjection 'If ever I remember to be holy' argues his lack of religion."²³

The case for considering Faulconbridge as a "concealed vice" seems persuasive enough in the play's first few acts but, as Van de Water²⁴ concedes herself, the hypothesis does not hold throughout. By Act Four, Faulconbridge's character has undergone something of a transformation. We might expect, then, that the Faulconbridge-devil flirtation would cease at some stage before this. In fact, a glance at the examples quoted above will show that the link is made on at least one occasion in every act. On the basis of this, we must consider the possibility that, if there is any Vice/Temptation plan in the play, the use of "devil" does not necessarily conform to it. In his introduction to the Arden edition of King John, E.A.J. Honigmann relates the devil appellations at II.i.135, IV.iii.95 ("Thou wert better gall the devil, Salisbury") and IV.iii.100 to a medieval Coeur-de-lion romance in which Richard I is flatteringly equated with the devil:

The sarasynes as I you tell
 Sayd he was the deuyll of hell (sig. G₇^v)
 Eueryche sate styll and plucked other
 And sayd this is the deuylls brother (sig. K₂)
 The sarasynes sayd than
 He was a deuyll and no man (sig. O₂^v)
 The englysshe deuyll I come is
 And but we flee out of his waye
 An euyll deth shall we dye to daye (sig. P₇)²⁵

In a poem written from a clearly English standpoint, Richard's title as the "englysshe deuyll" is both an expression of great military worth and a term of absolute military praise. In

King John, Shakespeare retains the old understanding of "devil" in his treatment of Coeur-de-lion's offspring, Faulconbridge, and deploys it, on occasions, as a measure of heroic value. The idea was first floated in 1 Henry VI²⁶ where, in reporting Talbot's exploits against the foreign foemen, the third Messenger recalls that "the French exclaim'd the devil was in arms" (I.i.125). Such usage, though, is untypical of the First Tetralogy where the word "devil" almost always denotes some degree of censure.

The play's most forceful figure of enclosure and of penetration is Death itself—not the "amiable lovely death" (III.iv.25) that Constance longs for, but the notorious Death of the emblem book and the morality play. This Death is a siegeman, a hard-hearted assailant, hammering through the very walls of life and pillaging their precious content. The most obvious physical enactment of this in King John is the siege of Angiers, where John threatens:

And but for our approach those sleeping stones
That as a waist doth girdle you about
By the compulsion of their ordinance
By this time from their fixed beds of lime
Had been dishabited, and wide havoc made
For bloody power to rush upon your peace.
(II.i.216-221)

There are other examples:

By east and west let France and England mount
Their battering cannon, charged to the mouths,
Till their soul-fearing clamours have brawl'd down
The flinty ribs of this contemptuous city.
(Faulc. II.i.381-4)

It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves that take their humours for a warrant
To break within the bloody house of life
(John IV.ii.208-210)

If I in act, consent, or sin of thought,
Be guilty of the stealing that sweet breath
Which was embounded in this beauteous clay,
Let hell want pains enough to torture me!

(Hubert IV.iii.135-8)

They found him dead, and cast into the streets,
An empty casket, where the jewel of life
By some damn'd hand was robb'd and ta'en away.

(Faulc. V.i.39-41)

Death, having prey'd upon the outward parts,
Leaves them invisible, and his siege is now
Against the mind

(P. Henry V.vii.15-17)

In Richard II, the King himself speaks of the transience of
even royalty, scorning those monarchs who are infused, by
Death, with vain conceit

As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and, humour'd thus,
Comes [Death] at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell, king!

(III.ii.167-70)

More than one critic²⁷ has made the point that the seventh
print in Hans Holbein's Imagines Mortis may have inspired these
lines in Richard II. No-one has suggested the possible influence
of the cut on Shakespeare's approach to Death in King John.
It is worth reminding ourselves of some of its details. An
emperor, issuing commands to his subjects, is oblivious to the
fact that a skeletal Death figure stands behind him, grasping
his crown and preparing to lift it off his head.²⁸ The Death
figure appears to be delving into the skull of the emperor,
though the verse in the 1545 edition does not suggest this:

Sic tibi disponas commissi munera regni
Vt transire alio posse repente putes.
Cur? quia cum uitam suscepta morte repones,
Tunc tua diuulsus gloria currus erit.²⁹

The point is of particular significance in relation to the idea of a body robbed of life--a motif that is forcefully expressed in King John. Death, the predator, strikes as a silent thief "stealing that sweet breath" of Arthur which was "embounded in this beauteous clay" and leaving behind, to use Salisbury's words, "a ruin of sweet life" (IV.iii.65), even at the very moment when the boy appeared to have escaped execution. So, too, taking another example just as pertinent to the subject of Holbein's cut, the dying King John is "besieged" by the danse macabre figure: "Death, having prey'd upon the outward parts, / Leaves them invisible, and his siege is now / Against the mind" (V.vii.15-17). The ambiguity of visual detail in the Holbein print affords us some licence to conjecture that it might have suggested to Shakespeare the notion of a smiling Death, grasping the head, besieging the mind, and delving into it, at the appointed time, to claim a final gruesome reward.

Indicative of the play's experimental diversity, the concepts of "enclosure" and "penetration" are also associated with references to Neptune and the ocean.

A refugee from the court of King John, and very uneasily ensconced in the service of a foreign army engaged in the conquest of his own country, Lord Salisbury accounts his despair in terms of Classical mythology:

I must withdraw and weep
Upon the spot of this enforced cause--
To grace the gentry of a land remote
And follow unacquainted colours here?
What, here? O nation, that thou couldst remove!
That Neptune's arms, who clippeth thee about,
Would bear thee from the knowledge of thyself
And grapple thee unto a pagan shore,
Where these two Christian armies might combine
The blood of malice in a vein of league,
And not to spend it so unneighbourly!

(V.ii.29-39)

A greatness lost, a nobility forsaken, a nation betrayed by its own self-destructiveness--all symptoms of the English

mythology reversed, and all, at one time or another, cited by Salisbury as warrant for his treason. Sir Lewis Lewkenor, in another context, writes of "the reprochful blot" such English renegades "have giuen to the noblenes of our heretofore vnblemished nation" in attempting "the ouerthrow of their countrie, and the taking awaie of their Soueraignes life."³⁰ And, similarly, the play does not reveal any sympathy for such treachery, even in the slippery world of King John's collapsing monarchy. Be this as it may, Salisbury's competing senses of fidelity to the crown and to his personal conscience, resolving in a confused but inviolate loyalty to his very "Englishness," may be seen as mirroring the state of a nation that has somehow brought upon itself the simultaneous calamities of civil war and foreign invasion--and yet is still able to salvage a trace of its great mythic heritage in the final act. The Neptunian metaphor underscores the paradox.³¹

Here, seen as some kind of embracing father-figure who ought to resort to the desperate extreme of carrying the entire English race to foreign shores, Neptune is as ambivalent in action and intent as his mythological career might suggest. At II.i, for example, Austria describes England as an island both threatened and protected by the ocean:

to my home I will no more return
Till Angiers and the right thou hast in France,
Together with that pale, that white-fac'd shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides
And coops from other lands her islanders--
Even till that England, hedg'd in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure
And confident from foreign purposes--
Even till that utmost corner of the west
Salute thee for her king.

(II.i.21-30)

Austria's exposé touches on several important themes. His understanding of the island as existing in the "utmost corner of the west" suggests a sense of remote isolation that will prove significant to the dramatist's developing vision of the

English mythology in Richard II. Our purposes here, though, require no more than the observation that, at line 24, England's shore line "spurns" the ocean, and yet, three lines later, the same ocean provides the "water-walled bulwark" that defends the isle from "foreign purposes." This enigmatic relation between the land and the sea to some extent reflects the strange quality of a nation whose own greatness is apparently compromised by its tendency to civil dissent and its resultant susceptibility to hostile penetration from abroad. The preoccupation with civil war is familiarly Elizabethan. Geoffrey Whitney, for example, writes that intestine strife "often times, this noble Lande did waste."³² And the closing lines of King John are as memorable for their stark warning as for their rousing patriotic sentiment:

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true.

(V.vii.112-18)

The great enemy is the enemy within, and if there is "diuision, either amongst the nobilytee or the commons," William Thomas generalises in 1549, "there ensueth vtter destruction of realmes, and subuercion of common wealthes."³³

It seems plausible to connect the "defensive" Neptune with the English mythology, and the "offensive" Neptune, spurned by England's shore, with the anti-mythology. The first complements the notion of an invincible and conquering English nation, the second acts as a figurative reminder of vulnerability to foreign aggression in less heroic times. It is surely no coincidence that Austria, the would-be "penetrator" of the sea-walled realm and, as slayer of Coeur-de-lion, the archetypal enemy of the English mythology, should be given the task of articulating the Neptunian ambivalence at II.i.21-30 (quoted above), weighing the defensive rôle of the sea against his own

determination to cross it and invade the island that would "spurn" him.³⁴ But Shakespeare's evolution of the "oceanic" motif in King John is marred on at least one occasion. The Englishman, Salisbury, enlightened by Melun and chastened by a new understanding of his patriotism, vows to abandon his rank and irregular course and "calmly run on in obedience / Even to our ocean, to our great King John" (V.iv.56-7). While John has, in some way, proved himself both defender and enemy of the English kingdom, the implied deific metaphor is too flattering by half. A Neptunian analogy is wholly inappropriate for a man who asks, on receipt of bad tidings: "Bear with me, cousin, for I was amaz'd / Under the tide; but now I breathe again / Aloft the flood" (IV.ii.137-9).

The play's themes of enclosure and penetration are by no means restricted to the figures of Neptune and Death. Souls are walled in by flesh (III.iii.19-22 and III.iv.17-19); vessels are surrounded and torn asunder by tempestuous seas: "So by a roaring tempest on the flood / A whole armado of convicted sail / Is scattered and disjointed from fellowship" (III.iv.1-3); a cloak holds out a fearful storm: "Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can / Hold out this tempest" (IV.iii.155-6); a child's life is imprisoned in a castle room (IV.i). Throughout the play, Shakespeare presents us with theatrical and verbal emblems that suggest, often violently, the ideas of encirclement and penetration. Shakespeare's designs are discernible and his figures promise significance. The image of the "tempest" savours of Neptunian ambivalence--the roaring "tempest" that King Philip regrets has scattered his fleet, apparently defending England from foreign assault, is the namesake, at least, of the "tempest" Faulconbridge fears will penetrate the English "cloak and cincture" and tear the nation apart. And Arthur's cell can possibly be understood as a figure of the anti-mythology from which only death may grant release. The suggestive relation of a theatrical emblem of this sort to the "imprisoned soul" motif is too striking to go unnoticed. Real difficulties of cohesion begin to manifest themselves when we attempt to link the various cliques of enclosure/penetration motifs, particularly

the "Death," "Neptune," and "soul" groupings. We may define their elements in terms of the English mythology and the reverse anti-mythology but, as groupings, they fail to inter-relate with persuasive coherence. A threatening ocean, an encircling Death, and an imprisoned soul awaiting release from the bond of the flesh are all constituents of a common anti-mythology, and yet almost seem to have been selected at random by the dramatist in his endeavours to evolve a "two way" imagistic mechanism that deploys a single motif as a reflection, on the one hand, of the English mythology and, on the other, of the anti-mythology. Neptune is a friend and an enemy, the soul is a free agent and a prisoner, Death is a brutal murderer and, as we shall see in a moment, the heroic encapsulation of the English military spirit.

Most critics and editors are agreed that King John can in no sense be considered a hero. The position of Faulconbridge is not as clear. W.A. Neilson asserts that the play lacks "a truly central character"³⁵ and Ivor B. John talks of the "want of a commanding central figure."³⁶ And Oxberry remarks that the "great defect is that interest does not sufficiently centre in any one individual of the play."³⁷ There is no denying, though, the extraordinary celebration of Faulconbridge's rôle afforded by a second critical camp. To G. Daniel he is "a singular compound of heroism, levity, and . . . servility."³⁸ Reed claims the Bastard has "a gentleness of spirit that characterizes true heroism."³⁹ Hudson calls him "a boiling down of the diffused old John Bull into an ideal specimen."⁴⁰ According to E.B. Warner, "Shakespeare intended to have him represent the sturdy heart of English manhood,"⁴¹ and Frederick Boas confirms that "His character is in entire accord with the origin to which he lays claim."⁴² The observations of Murry and Tillyard, already quoted above, need not be repeated here. If we are to talk of an English "myth-hero" in King John, then, clearly, the search must look in the direction of the Bastard Faulconbridge.

The theme of the battling English devil may be pushed further and related to 1 Henry VI's myth of the English soldier (and

Talbot in particular) as the incarnation of Death itself. For example, Talbot boasts that "My grisly countenance made others [Frenchmen] fly; / None durst come near for fear of sudden death" (I.iv.47-8), and the French General describes him as the "ominous and fearful owl of death" (IV.ii.15). Much the same thing happens in King John. This description of the English host, after the skirmish beneath the walls of Angiers, comes near the grim humour of the dance of death:

And like a jolly troop of huntsmen come
Our lusty English, all with purpled hands,
Dy'd in the dying slaughter of their foes.

(II.i.321-3)

And when the Bastard tries to resurrect, rhetorically, the English military reputation of old in his address to the French, he says, of John:

and in his forehead sits
A bare-ribb'd death, whose office is this day
To feast upon whole thousands of the French.

(V.ii.176-8)

The metaphor is much overstated, for John can muster none of the prestige he is here accredited with. The real significance lies in Shakespeare's choice of Faulconbridge as the heroic ambassador of English defiance. As the fruit of his developing patriotic awareness, his words to the French at this point are all the more revealing when we compare them with Faulconbridge's earlier appeals to the Death figure. In the second act, like some insatiable Hotspur, he had longed for the thrill of battlefield carnage, rejoicing as the French and the English confront each other before Angiers:

O, now doth Death line his dead chaps with steel;
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs;
And now he feasts, mousing the flesh of men,
In undetermin'd differences of kings.
Why stand these royal fronts amazed thus?
Cry 'havoc!' kings

(II.i.352-7)

Johnson glosses "Cry 'havoc!'" as "command slaughter to proceed."⁴³ Denied the satisfaction of annihilating Angiers, Shakespeare has him complain: "Here's a stay / That shakes the rotten carcass of old Death / Out of his rags" (II.i.455-7). And when an amicable agreement is reached between the warring parties, he reviles the transition from "a resolv'd and honourable war, / To a most base and vile-concluded peace" (II.i.585-6). The Bastard's lack of discrimination in bloody broil (it is the blood he longs for and not a righteous victory) falls very much in the mould of the Roman god of war, Mars, whose cruel and arbitrary machinations pervade Classical myth. The tragedy The Misfortunes of Arthur, written by Thomas Hughes and his collaborators in 1587, echoes a passage in Seneca's Phoenissae:

Wherefore thinke on the doubtfull state of warres,
Where Mars hath sway, he keepes no certayne course.
Sometimes he lettes the weaker to preuaile,
Sometimes the stronger stoupes: hope, fear and rage
With eyless lott rules all, uncertayne good,
Most certaine harmes, be his assured happes.⁴⁴

Classical Mars sponsors the evils of war--and while Shakespeare does not openly associate Faulconbridge with the deity, the link may be inferred.

If we had only Act Two as evidence, Ronald Berman's point that the Bastard "represents a dominant attitude of self-interest"⁴⁵ would ring wholly true. But, by Act Four, profound changes have occurred. The bloodthirsty warrior, zealously intent on random slaughter, is transformed into a would-be peacemaker. He is even daunted by the prospect of battle with the invading French forces (IV.iii.148-59). Significantly, when such battle is inevitable, his stern advice to the king draws on an allusion to Mars:

Away, and glister like the god of war
When he intendeth to become the field;
Show boldness and aspiring confidence.
What, shall they seek the lion in his den,
And fright him there, and make him tremble there?
(V.i.54-8)

If Faulconbridge had still been a "vice" figure at this stage, we might have supposed that his war god was the Classical Mars. Marcellus Palingenius makes clear the link between vice and that deity: "Then commes the yron world againe, and Mars approacheth neare, / Then fury conquers lawes and right, then lawfull is it found / For vice to liue vnpunished, then vertue lies a ground" (emphasis added).⁴⁶ Faulconbridge now has the well-being of England at heart and his reference can hardly relate to the bloody, vice-riddled world of Classical Mars. In fact, as a reference, it is "Classical" in name only. Rather like the figures of "Death" and "the devil," the Bastard's "god of war" is both anglicised and conscripted into the service of an English martial ideal.

Mars is not an unusual choice of protective deity. The Trojan Brutus, founder of the British nation and builder of New Troy, can trace his mythological ancestry to Mars. So, too, can Aeneas who himself led a second band of Trojan refugees to the shores of Italy and set the seeds of the great Roman race. The Elizabethans were not oblivious to the legend that they shared a common Old Troy heritage with the Roman people. John Stow emphasises the importance of the connection when he writes in A Survay of London (1598): "As Rome the chiefe Citie of the world to glorifie it selfe, drew her originall from the Gods, Goddesses, and demy Gods, by the Troian progeny. So this famous Citie of London for greater glorie, and in emulation of Rome, deriueth it selfe from the very same originall."⁴⁷ It is in keeping with Faulconbridge's new patriotic awareness that he should recall the pedigree of old at a time when Englishmen disloyally conspire against their monarch. And the choice of a Roman parallel is a fitting warning to present English times:

And you degenerate, you ingrate revolts,
 You bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb
 Of your dear mother England

(V.ii.151-3)

In 1 Henry VI, Talbot, a prospective myth-hero of the English mythology, promises to act like Nero. He, like Nero, will

"Play on the lute, beholding the towns burn" (I.iv.96). Talbot's allusion is acceptable in the "local" context of burning French towns, but how manifestly inappropriate it is to the broader vision of a myth-hero in an ideal English mythology. In strong contrast, the Bastard's utterance is more perceptively tuned to the crystallising needs of the English mythology and its reverse. The image of the defouled womb is a familiar theme of the anti-mythology in Richard III, and a powerfully evocative perversion of the heroic reproductive processes of the English myth. The saga of Nero is an especially suitable metaphor for the same. According to Ranulph Higden's Polycronycon, Nero "lete kerue his owne moders wombe for he wolde se the place that he was conceyued ynnre."⁴⁸ And if we are to go by Thomas Cooper's Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae (1584), these were not the only abuses committed by Nero against reproductive organs: "yet by the ineuitable corruption of his nature, hee became horribly vicious, in so much as he caused himselfe to be gelded, and cut in the fourme of a woman, and so to be abused, and by his crueltie caused his owne mother to be slaine, and the Citie of Rome to be burned, he in the meane time playing on an Harpe, and singing the destruction of Troy."⁴⁹ Higden also likens Nero's Rome to Troy: "Also for this he wolde see the lykenesse of Troye whan it was set a fyre he sette a grete dele of Rome a fyre that brent seuen nyghtes and seuen dayes and he began to crye & synge the gestes of Troye."⁵⁰ It is significant that Shakespeare should choose Faulconbridge as the man who points to the crimes of his compatriots. The mutilators he slanders are guilty not only of defiling the natural fruitful mechanism of the English mythology by turning Englishman against Englishman, but they strike, as well, at the very heart of England's Trojan heritage of greatness. There is a family lesson to be learned from the burning ruins of Nero's Rome.

In Henry V, the traitors Scroop, Cambridge and Grey are referred to as "English monsters!" (II.ii.85). In describing Salisbury and his associates as bloody beasts, raking up the womb of their mother England, Faulconbridge's sense is much the

same. Small wonder, then, that in Act Two the Bastard should prepare us for his future mythic consciousness by appealing for inspiration to the archetypal English monster slayer:

Saint George, that swing'd the dragon, and e'er since
Sits on's horse back at mine hostess' door,
Teach us some fence! [to Austria] Sirrah, were I at home,
At your den, sirrah, with your lioness,
I would set an ox-head to your lion's hide,
And make a monster of you.

(II.i.288-93)

C. Knight claims the appeal is fitting because "'Saint George' was the great war-cry of Richard."⁵¹ On the evidence of William Wyrley's The True Vse of Armore (1592), Knight must be mistaken.⁵² But putting aside the question of anachronism, Faulconbridge's cry, but for a flippancy characteristic at this stage of the play, might almost have been better at home in the nationalistic fervour of Henry V. Time and darkening events will bring a new note of urgency to the Bastard's monster allusion, and the desperate need for a monster-slayer to repulse the rebels and invaders in the final acts of King John will lend an air of deep seriousness to a folklorist reference here made in jest.

It is Faulconbridge who comes closest to furnishing us with a monster-slayer. However, this does not enable us to talk of him as a "myth hero." He is, as E.B. Warner has noticed, "not at all conspicuous in history"⁵³ and Shakespeare's elevation of him (coupled with the purposeful devaluation of King John's customary Tudor stature) suggests the dramatist may have had a special status in mind. If the status was that of myth-hero, then, in execution, the design is far from convincing. The Bastard speaks of John as a Death figure, urges the king to act like the god of war, appeals to Saint George. But the only compelling myth figure we can confidently equate with Faulconbridge is the English Devil. This, of itself, is meaningful, but it cannot veil a certain hesitancy and caution in Shakespeare's thematic development that leaves us with a series of disparate mythical nuances that together suggest an intention but not a fulfilment. Take, for example, the case of Hercules. There

is a single reference to the Greek hero in King John and, though Shakespeare puts it on the lips of Faulconbridge, it maintains a rather puzzling position in the myth structure of the play:

It lies as sightly on the back of him
As great Alcides' shows upon an ass;
But, ass, I'll take that burden from your back,
Or lay on that shall make your shoulders crack.

(II.i.143-6)

Many critics have sought to unravel the connotative difficulties of this passage but, unfortunately, without any broad or even substantial agreement. Several commentators⁵⁴ have indicated that the reference to Alcides and the ass is proverbial and in keeping with the Bastard's mode of speech ("Our country manners give our betters way" he tells Elinor at I.i.156). There is no obvious attempt to derive significance from the association of Austria's lion skin with that of Hercules, but it is worth remembering that his wearing of the skin is wholly Shakespeare's invention.⁵⁵ In like fashion, the dramatist seems content to forward the idea of a Mercury motif without developing it:

Be Mercury, set feathers to thy heels,
And fly like thought from them to me again.

(IV.ii.174-5)

It is curious, and uncharacteristic, that John should wax Classical in a moment of extreme anxiety. On the surface, the allusion is intended to emphasise the need for haste. While Mercury's rôle as a peacemaker⁵⁶ might fit Faulconbridge's endeavours in IV.iii, the most useful comparisons lie in the verbal wit he reveals in all his encounters with Austria, and in his "vice" aspirations expressed in the second act. Mercury, Thomas Cooper informs us, "was counted God of eloquence, merchandize, feats of actiuitie, and theft also."⁵⁷

The variety of mythological figures exercised by Shakespeare in connection with Faulconbridge to some extent defines the experimental nature of King John. The world of Richard II is

unsuited to the development of a myth hero theme, lacking both the threat of a foreign aggressor or the opportunity of conquest abroad. In the adventures of Prince Hal, culminating in the great victory at Agincourt, we have reason for more optimism. Nonetheless, as Shakespeare approaches Richard II, he has at his disposal a wide range of mythological material, evolved and flexed in the First Tetralogy and King John, with which he may rework and refine his vision of the English mythology and the anti-mythology.

King John

Notes

¹ Peter Alexander writes in Shakespeare (Oxford Univ. Press, 1964) that "it is not contrary to the evidence to regard The Troublesome Raigne along with Leir as productions by imitators of Shakespeare, and not his sources" (p. 171).

² E.A.J. Honigmann, ed., King John, 4th ed. (1954; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), pp. xi-lviii.

³ The edition used is that of Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, IV (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 72-151.

⁴ "Shakespeare and the Double Image of King John," Shakespeare Studies, 1 (1965), p. 68.

⁵ Quoted by M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (Edward Arnold Ltd., 1961), p. 265.

⁶ John R. Elliot, "Shakespeare and the Double Image of King John," discusses Vergil's hostility towards King John on pp. 69-70.

⁷ Quoted by Elliot, "Shakespeare and the Double Image of King John," pp. 70-1.

⁸ See Matchett's paper "Richard's Divided Heritage in King John," Essays in Criticism, 12 (1962), p. 232.

⁹ For example, John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1945), p. 321; Ivor B. John, ed., The Life and Death of King John (Methuen & Co., 1907), p. xxxiii; E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (1944; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 238.

¹⁰ Chambers is quoted by M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty, p. 261.

¹¹ King John, note to II.i.180.

¹² The King James version is used. In the Genevan version of The Bible: That Is, The Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament (Robert Barker, 1603) the same verse reads: "for I am the Lord thy God, a ielous God, visiting the iniquitie of the fathers vpon the children, vpon the third generation and vpon the fourth of them that hate me."

¹³ "The Road to Swinstead Abbey: A Study of the Sense and Structure of King John," ELH, 18 (1951), p. 262.

¹⁴ "Richard's Divided Heritage in King John," p. 234.

¹⁵ Les Vrais Povrtraits Des Hommes Illvstres En Piete Et Doctrine, Dv Trauail desquels Dieu s'est serui en ces derniers temps, pour remettre sus la vraye Religion en diuers pays de la Chrestienté (Geneva: Jean De Laon, 1581), p. 256.

¹⁶ This print is recorded and described by Adam Bartsch in his work Le Peintre Graveur (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1866), VI, 259. This is the "Nouvelle Edition."

¹⁷ Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accomodata, utriusque Facultatis exemplis suo loco insertis, quae quidem ex Indorum maxime deprompta sunt Historiis, unde praeter doctrinam summa quoque delectatio comparabitur (Perusiae apud P. Petrutium, 1579), p. 214. Mario Praz refers to the author as Didacus Valades (as opposed to Diego Valades) in Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery (Rome: Edizioni di Storia E Letteratura [Sussidi Eruditi], 1964).

¹⁸ Nicholas Ling, Politeuphuia. Wits Commonwealth (1597, first publ.; H. Ballard[?] for John Smithweck, 1608), gives the definition on p. 5^r.

¹⁹ Honigmann, ed., King John, note to IV.iii.142-3.

²⁰ Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1947), p. 167.

²¹ "The Bastard in King John," Shakespeare Quarterly, 11 (1960), p. 141.

²² John Middleton Murry, Shakespeare (Jonathan Cape, 1936), p. 159 and p. 161.

²³ Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 234.

²⁴ "The Bastard in King John," pp. 143-4.

²⁵ E.A.J. Honigmann cites the examples (and the signature references) in his edition of King John, p. xxii.

²⁶ E.M.W. Tillyard, in Shakespeare's History Plays, notices similarities between King John and 1 Henry VI: "Both plays deal with French deceit, both contain long scenes of siege-warfare in France" (p. 223).

²⁷ According to Matthew W. Black, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King Richard the Second (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1955), p. 198, Douce (1807) was the first critic to draw this intriguing comparison.

²⁸ James M. Clark, in his notes to Hans Holbein, The Dance of Death (Phaidon Press Ltd., 1947), has this to say of the Emperor cut: "Surrounded by his courtiers, the Emperor is on his throne, beneath a baldachin supported by pillars in the Renaissance style. He holds in his right hand a sword with a broken tip. The orb and sceptre lie on a cushion at his feet, symbolizing the end of his reign. While Death snatches the crown from his head, the Emperor is looking sternly at a nobleman, as if rebuking him and urging the petition of the poor suppliant who is kneeling before the throne. It is while attempting to enforce justice that the Emperor meets his end" (p. 104).

²⁹ Hans Holbein, Imagines Mortis (1538, first publ.; Lvgdvni, svb scvto Coloniensi, 1545), sig. A6^r.

³⁰ The Estate of English fugitives vnder the king of Spaine and his ministers (T. Scarlet for John Drawater, 1595), p. 1^v.

³¹ Neptune's apparently contradictory rôles of "aggressor" and "defender" will be more fully explored in the next chapter.

³² A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586), p. 7.

³³ The Historve of Italye (1549, first publ.; Thomas Marshe,

1561), sig. A2^v (preface).

34 Spenser uses the name of Neptune as a synonym for the sea or ocean on two occasions in The Fairie Queene. See The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser (William Pickering, 1839), IV, (F.Q.) 3.4.32 and 3.4.42. The references in Spenser are noticed by Henry Gibbons Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (1932; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), p. 89.

35 William Allan Neilson, ed., The Complete Dramatic and Poetic Works of William Shakespeare (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), p. 478.

36 The Life and Death of King John, p. xxxiii.

37 Quoted by Horace Howard Furness, Jr., ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1919), in the appendices (p. 599).

38 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 601.

39 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 588.

40 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 590.

41 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 592.

42 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 592.

43 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 125.

44 The Misfortunes of Arthur (1587; facsimile rpt. Old English Drama, Students' Facsimile Edition, 1911), II.iii.87-92. For the Senecan parallel, see Seneca's Tragedies, trans. Frank Justus Miller (William Heinemann, 1929), II, (Phoenissae) lines 622-30: "Now picture to thyself war's mishaps, the wavering

chances of uncertain Mars: though thou bring with thee the whole strength of Greece, though thy armed soldiery spread far and wide, the fortune of war hangs ever in doubtful scale, according as Mars determines."

45 "Anarchy and Order in Richard III and King John," Shakespeare Survey, 20 (1967), p. 51.

46 Barnaby Googe, trans., The Zodiake of Life (1560; facsimile rpt. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1947), p. 170. This reprint edition has an introduction written by Rosemond Tuve.

47 A Svrvey of London (J. Windet for John Wolfe, 1598), p. 1. These are the opening words of the book.

48 Polycronycon, trans. J. Trevisa (Southwerke: Peter Treueris, 1527), fol. 154^v. Trevisa's translation of this work first appeared in 1482.

49 Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, tam accurate congestus, vt nihil venè in eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latinè complectatur amplissimus Stephani Thesaurus, vel Anglicè, toties aucta Eliotae Bibliotheca (1565, first publ.; John Torkington, 1584), sig. 711^v.

50 Higden, Polycronycon, fol. 154^v.

51 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 115.

52 The Trve Vse of Armorie, Shewed by Historie, and plainly proued by example (J. Jackson, for Gabriell Cawood, 1592), p. 33.

53 Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King John, p. 592.

54 E.A.J. Honigmann, ed., King John, mentions Steevens and Tilley, for example, in his note on II.i.144.

55 Stopford A. Brooke observes that "To give his [the Bastard's] anger full reason Shakespeare makes Austria guilty of Coeur-de-lion's death, which he is not." Brooke's argument may be found in A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life

and Death of King John, p. 596.

⁵⁶ See Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, p. 81: "It is chiefly through the powers of Caduceus that Mercury figures as a peacemaker."

⁵⁷ Cooper, Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, sig. 7H5^r.

Richard II

With his country in the grasp of a king whose manoeuvrings have verged on misrule, his son banished and his own life nearing its end, John of Gaunt pays homage to the English realm, describing it as

This other Eden, demi-paradise

(II.i.42)

Shakespeare's generation appear to have found the word "paradise" particularly evocative. One Elizabethan translator (1581) considers the Low Countries to have been "the Paragone, or rather, yearthly Paradise, of all the Countries in Europe."¹ To Captain Bingham (1583), Newfoundland is "The paradise, of all the world."² It is the opinion of Erasmus³ that Sir Thomas More's Utopia was intended to represent England and, as if in evidence, W. Lightfoot, in The Complaint of England (1587), describes his country as one "much resembling the happinesse of Paradise."⁴ And S. Jourdan thinks that Bermuda is "one of the sweetest Paradises that be vpon the earth."⁵ In each case, "paradise" is a rather vague component in the rhetoric of superlatives. Gaunt's allusion is much more precise, far more aware of its Biblical derivation. As with Cleopatra's "demi-Atlas of this earth" (Antony and Cleopatra I.v.23), he uses "demi-" in the sense of "second" rather than "half." The idea of England as a second Biblical paradise was not unfamiliar to the Elizabethans. Thomas Stocker frames his praise of England in Hebraic terms when he writes in the preface to his 1581 translation of Marnix van Sant Aldegonde's history of the civil war in the Low Countries: "For, where can wee read either in the olde Testament, or yet in any other prophane Historie, that euer God, dealte more bountiffully, with any Nation then with us, either for thynges needefull and necessarie, or delightfull and pleasaunt for this life. So that it maie verie well be saied of us, that we enioye a lande, flowyng

with Milke and Honie."⁶ Robert Greene anticipates Gaunt's second Eden strain in his propagandist work The Spanish Masquerado (1589): "Seeing then we are euery way blest and fauoured from aboue: that the Lord our mercifull God maketh England like Eden, a second paradise: let us fear to offend him."⁷ Greene may perhaps have in mind the popular Post-Reformation scheme of the Papistry as the Beast of the Apocalypse, the Church of England as the True Church, and England itself as the New Jerusalem.⁸ In a letter to the Times Literary Supplement (28 November, 1952), A.S.T. Fisher offers Joshua Sylvester's English panegyric as a possible source of Shakespeare's Eden/paradise line:

All hail (dear Albion) Europ's pearl of price,
The Worlds rich Garden, Earths rare Paradise⁹

Peter Ure¹⁰ has established a persuasive connection between the two authors, but there are problems of chronology that neither he nor Fisher can resolve.

While Gaunt's expression of a second Eden is pointedly Biblical, specific traditions of England as a paradise may be found in other quarters. Josephine Waters Bennett, approaching the question of "paradise" from a predominantly Classical perspective, has traced the origins of the legend of Britain as an isolated island divided from the rest of the world, and has provided evidence for, as she puts it, "a more nebulous and vague association of Britain with the mythical islands of the Western Ocean, such as Thule, the Fortunate Isles, or Hesperides, the Islands of the Blest, and Homer's Ogygia."¹¹ Bennett notices, in passing, Shakespeare's reference to the "other Eden, demi-paradise" in Richard II (p. 125).

Gaunt's expression of the mythology of English paradise has invited both literary comparison and critical comment. A second mythology in Richard II has remained rather more obscure. The mythology of the "fallen paradise" maintains a compelling presence in the play. The dramatist approaches the idea of a "fall" and a postlapsarian world through vistas that are both varied and complementary:

Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth
(I.i.104-5)

Cry woe, destruction, ruin, and decay--
The worst is death, and death will have his day.
(III.ii.102-3)

Ah, thou, the model where old Troy did stand
(V.i.11)

Each of these examples, in its way, conveys to us the sense of a "fall." Yet, the first is Biblical, the second covertly iconographical, and the third Classical. Together they relate to the central mythology of an English transgression and of a paradise lost--a mythology that may derive many of its ideas and some of its terminology from other sources but which, in Shakespeare's vision, asserts an essentially English identity. It will be the task of this chapter to demonstrate that, in Richard II, the figures of the English mythology and the anti-mythology, articulated in the preceding plays, are developed and expanded into visions of English paradise and English paradise lost.

Caroline F.E. Spurgeon has noticed that "the ideas of birth and generation, also of inheritance from father to son, are a good deal in Shakespeare's mind in this play."¹² Such ideas are amenable to much closer scrutiny than the vast scope of Spurgeon's book permits. As in any play, certain lines and passages remain pivotal to the action and crucial to our understanding of the work. Two such lines occur in the second act. Here, drawn together by circumstance and a common political disposition, three noblemen discuss the state of the kingdom. The times are dangerous and men must be careful, but one at last abandons caution and hints at the return of Harry Hereford:

even through the hollow eyes of death
I spy life peering
(II.i.270-1)

It is, of necessity, a cryptic clue but still identifiable as lying within a popular iconographic tradition. To understand

that tradition and to explain the significance of Northumberland's image, it will be necessary to digress for a moment.

There is a print in Hans Holbein's Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti (1547) that portrays Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden.¹³ Adam is clearing a root from a bare stretch of earth and he is assisted, almost shadowed, by a skeletal Death figure. In the background, Eve nurses her first-born son. This is the plate's verse accompaniment from the Lyons edition:

Mauldicte en ton labeur la terre.
En labeur ta uie useras,
Iusques que la Mort te soubterre.
Toy pouldre en pouldre tourneras.

The allusion is to Genesis iii.17 and 19.¹⁴ The gift of Eden was happiness and immortality; the punishment of transgression sorrow and death. Giovanni Lambi neatly summarises the tragedy when he says that "vnto the first Parents Adam and Eve, for penance of sinne death was giuen, which will neuer be separated from the whole posterity."¹⁵ But the world of fallen Adam is not entirely without consolation. Even as he works, a living man shadowed by Death, his child lies in the arms of mother Eve. There is the actuality of physical regeneration, of new hope, of a life not without purpose symbolically portrayed by Holbein through the suggestion of tillage and the promise of sown seed. It is likely, even probable, that Shakespeare was familiar with this print. Holbein had strong connections with England. He spent much of his life in the court of Henry VIII and is believed to have executed a Dance of Death mural in Whitehall Palace, but the destruction by fire of a great deal of the building in 1698 leaves the matter in some doubt.¹⁶

The publication of an English version of Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti as early as 1549 attests to the likelihood of the work's popularity in England.¹⁷ Further, Shakespeare could have had access to any number of emblem engravings that might have suggested to him the notion of "life in death." Emblematisers like Richard Lubbaeus (1579),¹⁸ Nicolas Reusner

(1581),¹⁹ and Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1585),²⁰ create, as their vehicles of expression, images of children holding or resting upon skulls. Others turn, as Holbein almost does, to a mixture of human and vegetal symbol. Claude Paradin, in Les Devises Heroiques (1561), depicts sprigs of wheat growing from bones and adds the motto "Spes altera vitae,"²¹ which may be translated as either "Another hope of life" or "The hope of another life." Joachim Camerarius,²² in his 1595 edition, repeats Paradin's emblem and uses the same ambiguous Latin adage. In the Antwerp issue of Emblemata (1564), Joannes Sambucus²³ uses, as his final device, a plant flourishing out of the top of a skull. The Spaniard Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias (1591)²⁴ executes two emblems worthy of closer observation. In the first, a new-born plant rises out of a pile of skulls and is entitled "Enla Mverte esta la vida" (p. 194^r). The second reveals a skull balanced on top of a shrub and bears the inscription "Enla Vida esta la Mverte" (p. 252^r). Some forty years later, George Wither published A Collection of Emblemes (largely an assemblage of prints from earlier periods) and chose as his twenty-first emblem a skull with sprigs of wheat growing out of the eyes and mouth: "When we are Borne, to Death-ward straight we runne; / And by our Death, our Life is new-begunne."²⁵ This couplet provides a fitting conclusion to Wither's commentary on what is, in essence, an image of life peering through the hollow eyes of death.

The idea of life "new-begunne" can be interpreted in two ways. Both are important. Firstly, in the notion of rebirth, be it visually represented as plant growth or as childhood, there is the implicit suggestion of the physical regenerative capability of the human race. Secondly, by confirming the paradox of spiritual life in physical death, the emblematisers make that clear theological distinction between the earthly humanity of this world and the religious spirituality of the next—a theme with which we have already dealt in the previous chapters. Life on earth becomes a spiritual abyss from which only physical death may grant relief. These two concepts are neither new nor surprising, and they would perhaps rank as

insignificant to the myth-structure of Richard II, and the English mythology in particular, if Shakespeare had not taken their elements and composed, in conspiracy with England's legendary past, a new and thrilling harmony.

even through the hollow eyes of death
I spy life peering

The sense is both physical and spiritual. Harry Hereford is the flesh and blood son of his father. But more than that, Northumberland understands him, as well, as the spiritual progeny of his father. The iconographical incompatibility of physical life and spiritual life is here abandoned. In the dramatist's view of the English paradise on earth, the two become mutually dependent. Here is how Hereford addresses his father as he prepares for that most chivalric of medieval rituals, the challenge tournament:

O thou, the earthly author of my blood,
Whose youthful spirit, in me regenerate,
Doth with a twofold vigour lift me up
To reach at victory above my head,
Add proof unto mine armour with thy prayers,
And with thy blessings steel my lance's point,
That it may enter Mowbray's waxen coat
And furbish new the name of John o' Gaunt,
Even in the lusty haviour of his son.

(I.iii.69-77. Emphasis added.)

The resurrection motif, initiated in 1 Henry VI, here arrives at the apex of its development. Young Hereford explicitly links the process of spiritual regeneration with physical regeneration in a conception of splendid mortality resurrecting itself from generation to generation. It is the very essence of the English mythology. Witness, also, the way Gaunt talks of England as "This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land / Dear for her reputation through the world" (II.i.57-8 Emphasis added). Spiritual purity and earthly achievement mingle in a curious unity. Images of worth and "preciousness" are connected with the English earth in the play's early stages

and, in this case, the word "dear" as a value arbiter is associated with both the souls and the land of England. Josephine Waters Bennett has explored the notion of England as "Elizium" citing, as one of her examples, Procopius of Caesarea who recounts a third century legend that the souls of the dead were ferried across the Channel to Britain.²⁶ Shakespeare's sense of "souls" in Gaunt's usage is somewhat different. His souls are earthly souls and the word, as a synonym for the living individual, is repeated again and again in the play—though this is not to deny the presence of more conventional theological usage. It is the traditional quality and character of English life on earth that gives Lancaster's myth-paradise a sense of spiritual continuity.

Although the need for individual replenishment is one dictated by the Biblical curse of mortality in a postlapsarian world (a reality not even the English myth-paradise can avoid), many of the play's "old world" characters conceive of such a process as celebrative in so far as it sustains England's heroic military spirit. The most powerful metaphoric expression of that regenerative splendour is to be found in the imagery of earth-fertility. Here is Gaunt:

This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed, and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son;

(II.i.50-6. Emphasis added.)

The fecundity of the English realm is a notion evoked again by Hotspur's allusion to the "teeming earth" (1 Henry IV III.i.28) and traceable, at least, to Geoffrey of Monmouth's line: "quicquid mortalium usui congruit, indeficienti fertilitate ministrat."²⁷ More relevant, perhaps, is Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles in the first volume of which the writer describes how Albion, son of Neptune, "hearing of the commodities of the

countrie, and plentifulnesse of soile here, made a voiage ouer, and finding the thing not onelie correspondent unto, but also farre surmounting the report that went of this Island, it was not long after yer he inuaded the same by force of armes."²⁸

Lucretius²⁹ images the earth as a "mother" in De Rerum Natura. But what prompted Shakespeare's link between earth's fertility and crops of chivalric heroes is not clear. It may have been a common equation in Elizabethan times. Sylvester echoes, if not anticipates, such an idea in his own English encomium:

Thrice-happy Mother, which ay bringest forth
Such Chivalry as daunteth all the Earth
(Planting the Trophies of thy glorious Arms
By Sea and Land, where ever Titan warms)³⁰

The Duchess of Gloucester, in an emblematical touch, adapts the earth-fertility image used later by Gaunt in describing Edward's seven sons as "seven fair branches springing from one root" (I.ii.13) and her husband, in particular, as a "flourishing branch of his [Edward III's] most royal root" (I.ii.18). Richard Altick³¹ considers this a reference to the familiar medieval genealogical symbol of the Tree of Jesse, but it seems more useful to look back to the rather undisciplined profusion of agronomical imagery in the Henry VI trilogy. There, kings and would-be kings are "planted," "reaped," and "rooted up."³²

The germ nurtured in those plays flourishes, at last, in Richard II's English Garden of Eden, a paradise that exists within a fallen world, turning its own physical mortality to spiritual advantage. When George Chapman writes, of England, "though the whole world besides moves, yet this isle stands fixed on her own feet and defies the world's mutability,"³³ he might almost have been inspired by the same vision of a regenerating and, therefore, perpetual distinction that informs the whole mythology of English paradise in Richard II.

If, then, we understand the English spirit as one purchased and upheld by mortal reputation, Richard's failure to preserve such a spirit could be construed as a spiritual death. In a powerful figurative inversion, the physically dying Gaunt makes

just such an assumption and turns the image of death on Richard himself:

O, no! thou diest, though I the sicker be.

(II.i.91)

And a few lines later:

Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land

Wherein thou liest in reputation sick

(II.i.95-6. Emphasis added.)

Since, according to Gaunt and others, Richard has abdicated his position as the spiritual inheritor and progenitor of the English chivalric tradition, old Lancaster himself becomes one of the final defenders of that order. In his chorus-like expression of the fallen paradise, the theme of the earth as a womb assumes a new and chilling dimension. No longer a place of birth, it becomes a place of death, a grave--and because the possibility of spiritual regeneration seems lost, the old man endows the image with a sense of macabre futility: "Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave, / Whose hollow womb inherits nought but bones" (II.i.82-3).³⁴ If the teeming womb of the English paradise had denoted both physical and spiritual renewal of the English mythology, then the hollow womb of the fallen paradise comprehends the awful finality of its antithesis. Even on the edge of death, it appears Gaunt does not entertain the possibility of his son's early return or of the revival, as Northumberland's image of "life peering" might promise, of the old heroic spirit. No doubt, he, like York, would have disapproved of Hereford's rebellion but, in the event, the prophecy of spiritual nadir holds as good for Bolingbroke and his regime as Gaunt thought it did for Richard. True, the youthful usurper is remarkably adept at deploying the terms and precepts of the English mythology of earthly paradise to his own advantage, as when he woos York with the lines "You are my father, for methinks in you / I see old Gaunt alive" (II.iii.117-8), but this is no more than the calculated rhetoric of politics. Bolingbroke is the archetype of an altogether new order, an order that threatens a "crimson

tempest" (III.iii.46) if it does not have its way, and yet, by having its way, ensures the same. The king well appreciates the irony:

But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation, and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.

(III.iii.95-100)

In the spiritual desolation of the fallen paradise, images of physical regeneration assume grotesque dimensions. Richard's equation of blood and dew perverts the earth-fertility terminology of the English myth-paradise, and relates to his later warning to those who "plant unrightful kings" (V.i.63, emphasis added). This figurative corruption is indicative of the imagistic evolution that compasses the transition from Gaunt's glorious, regenerative womb in the mythology of English paradise, to the bloody regeneration of civil war's horrors, predicted with appropriate reproductive force in 3 Henry VI: "What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly, / Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural, / This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!" (II.v.90-1, emphasis added). The earth-fertility images of Gaunt's second Garden of Eden succumb to the images of the barren womb, to Carlisle's foreboding prophecy that "The blood of English shall manure the ground" (IV.i.137, emphasis added) and, ultimately, to Bolingbroke's regret that "blood should sprinkle me to make me grow" (V.vi.46).

While many characters show an awareness of paradise lost, the blame for such a fall is variously placed. The Lancastrian camp quite naturally see Richard as the culpable party, the man whose misdemeanours in the English garden have led to the decline of that garden and the execution of a crime (the Duke of Gloucester's murder) whose consequences are so vast and tragic that the outraged Bolingbroke speaks of it in terms of the primordial homicide: "Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's,

cries, / Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth, / To me for justice and rough chastisement" (I.i.104-6). The style of the first scene is frequently one of hyperbole, and the sentiments often hollow and ceremonious, but we would be wrong to neglect the import of such lines. The murder has brought death into Richard's court, and he strives in vain to nullify its consequences, first by advising against a bloody contest, and then by banishing the antagonists. But Gloucester's blood (the "sacred blood" at I.ii.17; the "precious liquor" two lines later) comes to embody all that is worthy and sacrosanct in the paradisial mythology and its spillage confirms the fall of the English paradise as the murder of Abel confirmed the Fall of man. In this respect, the Gardener's scene (III.iv) is of significance. It is not new to remark upon the paradisial connotations of the episode. S.K. Heninger observes that "underlying the entire scene is the standard of order which prevailed in the Garden of Eden, God's prototype of natural harmony. The Gardener is 'old Adam's likeness' (III.iv.73). The meaning of the scene depends upon the cosmological imagery which compares the ideal conditions in Eden to the actual conditions promoted by Richard."³⁵ Heninger seems justified in affixing the blame on Richard. In berating Richard's monarchy (lines 54-66), the Gardener not only favours the conquering Bolingbroke but actually sounds a little like him.³⁶ And it is revealing that, while the garden itself represents a place of toil and close attention to the Gardener, it is, to the Queen's Lady (and, by association, to the Queen herself), a place of games (III.iv.3), of dancing (line 6), of story telling (line 10), and of singing (line 19). The Queen may repudiate these frivolous pastimes now, but, measured against the Gardener's sobriety, their suggestive eminence in former times attests to a certain royal delinquency.

The opposite view, proposed by the Royalist party, conceives of Bolingbroke as the decimator of paradise and of Richard as an innocent victim.³⁷ The usurper, himself, contributes to this thesis by framing Richard's murder in terms of the Biblical precedent. At the end of the play, he tells Exton

With Cain go wander thorough shades of night,
And never show thy head by day nor light.

(V.vi.43-4)

The assassin has acted on Bolingbroke's own words in committing an act of darkness that blemishes Henry's newly-acquired sun king identification.³⁸ The indelible balm of the anointed king in the mythology of paradise becomes the indelible blood on the hands of the guilty usurper in the mythology of fallen paradise. Let us not think, though, that the king's murder is the cursed transgression that surrenders paradise. It is no more than a symptom, as Cain's transgression was, of an already fallen world. From the Royalist standpoint, paradise was lost the moment Bolingbroke set foot on forbidden English soil, bringing with him the infection of civil war. Thomas Combe might almost be speaking of Bolingbroke's England when he writes, in The Theater of fine devices, "Then ciuill discord set their hearts at warre, / And caused each man his owne good to marre."³⁹ So, overhearing the Gardener in III.iv, the Queen lends to his suggestion of Richard's deposition the force of the Hebraic Fall of Adam:

Thou, old Adam's likeness, set to dress this garden,
How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this displeasing news?
What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee
To make a second fall of cursed man?
Why dost thou say King Richard is depos'd?
Dar'st thou, thou little better thing than earth,
Divine his downfall?

(III.iv.73-9)

Thomas Cooper tells us that, amongst other things, the name Adam "doth signifie man, or redde earth,"⁴⁰ and when Queen Isabel calls the "old Adam" Gardener a "little better thing than earth," she doubly echoes the Biblical Fall of man from a prelapsarian state of immortality to a transient and earth-bound mortality. We are experiencing, once again, the devaluation of Gaunt's glorious English earth, a devaluation now connected not with Richard but with Lancaster's own son. In the fallen

world of both the Scriptures and England, the human body is valued at no more than the dust from whence it came (Genesis iii.19) and destined, at last, for the "earthy pit" (IV.i.219) of the grave.

For different reasons, King John has been twinned by at least two critics with Richard II.⁴¹ In the development of English myth and anti-myth, the link is important. King John does not allude to Eden or to paradise lost, and the play lacks the sense of a "fall" initiated by a single transgression. But the Bastard's scheme of an English soul in an anglicised heaven, and the equation of England's goodness and Arthur's fleeing spirit, prepare us, in some way, for the advent of a more complex and coherent vision in Richard II. Similarly, the theme of "encirclement," central to Shakespeare's statement of myth and anti-myth in the earlier work, is of crucial significance to the articulation of paradise and paradise lost in this the first play of the Lancastrian quartet.

John of Gaunt, in the course of his English panegyric, speaks of England as

This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
(II.i.46-9)

The sea as a protective "wall" is a useful complement to the mythology of England as an isolated Eden, and is repeated by the First Servant at III.iv.43 ("our sea-walled garden"). In his book The Lost Garden, John Wilders recognises that the "sense of a lost paradise and of a country falling into ruin after an ideal past is conveyed most powerfully in Richard II."⁴² In his seventh chapter, Wilders relates the "gardens" in Shakespeare's history plays to Eden, and suggests that the "old Persian word pairidaeza, from which the English word 'paradise' is derived, signified a walled garden, park or orchard and there is evidence that Shakespeare thought of such places when he created the temporary retreats from the world into which

some of his characters take refuge" (pp. 133-4). The obvious significance Wilders attaches to the idea of paradise as a "walled" garden, park or orchard might be helpful, as well, to our examination of Neptune's rôle in relation to the English second Eden. We should, though, be cautioned by Octavio Alvarez who, in his book The Celestial Brides, derives the word paradise from the Avestan Pairidaeza which he translates as "Enclosure of Women."⁴³ Despite these clear semantic contrarieties, both Wilders and Alvarez understand paradise as an enclosure of some sort. Shakespeare's "sea-walled" England harbours that same fundamental connotation. Yet, we would be wrong to consider Neptune's sea-wall a wholly beneficent property of the ideal English myth-paradise. Within a few lines, the old Lancaster appears to contradict his earlier statement (II.i.46-9) by talking of an

England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of wat'ry Neptune

(II.i.61-3)

In Gaunt's imagined paradise, the sea is presented in the paradoxical guise of both threatener and protector of the English realm. The dramatist's approach to this ambivalence differs significantly from two of his possible sources. Here, for example, is an excerpt from Sonnet xlv in Samuel Daniel's Delia:

Flourish faire Albion, glory of the North,
Neptunes darling helde betweene his armes:
Deuided from the world as better worth,
Kept for himselfe, defended from all harmes.⁴⁴

But, writing in a context of civil war, Daniel reads a passive hostility into the sea-god's English office:

"Why Neptune; Hast thou made vs stand alone
"Diuided from the world, for this, say they?
"Hemd-in, to be a spoyle to tyrannie,
"Leauing affliction hence no way to flie?"⁴⁵

Daniel associates a benevolent Neptune with English well-being, and a malevolent Neptune with civil war. Raphael Holinshed's usage is similar. Early in the first volume of his Chronicles, the writer extolls the greatness of Neptune in his capacity as protector of all who travel by sea—possibly preparing the way for the sea odyssey of the Trojan Brutus which immediately follows.⁴⁶ Yet, in the same chapter, when the unpleasant Lestrigo aims at the deposition of good King Lucas by stirring up civil rebellion, Neptune is seen to assist him in his wicked intent.⁴⁷

If Shakespeare's use of Neptune was suggested by either or both of these historians, then it appears he went to some lengths to adjust the sea-god's duality to his own needs in II.i. Unlike Daniel and Holinshed, he does not consider the deity's English function as one corresponding to the internal felicity or otherwise of the realm. Neptune, as the surrounding sea, is a constant and potential source, simultaneously, of both good and evil. This is in keeping with the god's Classical standing. Neptune, it will be recalled, was dissatisfied with his share of Saturn's empire and attempted, with others, to annex a portion of the earth and heavens.⁴⁸ Foiled in this strategy, he was forced by Jupiter to build, or repair, the walls of Troy as punishment—a task for which Laomedon refused to pay him. His grudge against Troy for this slight is recalled in The Iliad: "My task was to build a wall for the Trojans round their town, a strong and splendid one to make the place impregnable . . . but when the happy hour for payment came, the unconscionable Laomedon refused outright to give us any wages . . . That is the man whose people you [Apollo] are now so anxious to oblige, instead of joining us and seeing to it that these insolent Trojans shall be utterly wiped out, together with their children and their loving wives."⁴⁹ Yet, even as he talks, his own wall defends the race he would destroy. This dual sense of the protective Neptune (his Trojan wall) and the threatening Neptune (his hope of Troy's destruction) is manifest in John of Gaunt's interpretation of the god's English rôle. On the one hand, the sea is the encircling defender, in Gaunt's

words the "wall" (II.i.47), against foreign invasion; on the other, he is the would-be appropriator, the envious siegeman, with designs on the earthly heaven of England. A number of factors might suggest (wrongly, as it turns out) an equation of Bolingbroke and Neptune. Bolingbroke returns from his banishment with a sea-borne army to invade a land he was pledged to defend and to depose a king who, by definition of his divine sanction, was "iust, trewe, and unfallible."⁵⁰ And he brings with him, to use York's phrase, "a tide of woes" (II.ii.98). Bolingbroke's return is consistently framed in terms of sea imagery, and the words "beat back" are used to describe, firstly, how England's shore "beats back the envious siege / Of wat'ry Neptune" and, secondly, how York will try to "beat back Bolingbroke" (II.ii.144). Kathryn Montgomery Harris has noted Gaunt's ambiguous approach to the sea and has proposed that "This ambivalence is functional. When England is 'this other Eden' the sea protects; when leased out by Richard 'like to a tenement or pelting farm' (II.i.60), the sea is a threatening envious bond."⁵¹ This is surely not the sense of the passage in question. Old Lancaster clearly conceives of the Neptunian ambivalence as being a wholly integral element of the mythology of the English paradise, and he makes a sharp distinction between the glorious England bound in by envious Neptune (II.i.61-3) and Richard's wretched England "bound in with shame" (II.i.63). John of Gaunt's treatment of Neptune represents the principles of security and threat within the English paradise, and it is a paradise made all the more valuable by the possibility of its loss. This seems a variation on a familiar emblem book theme, instanced aptly by Thomas Combe:

Jupiter, as the learned Homer writes,
 Mingleth the good and bad in such a sort,
 That men obtaine not pleasures and delights,
 Without some paine to waite vpon the sport⁵²

The Biblical Eden possessed, in the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the latent means of its own destruction. To equate

Bolingbroke and Neptune would be to equate the serpent and the fruit, the agent of doom and the principle of threat.

The encirclement motif finds variation in another Classical quarter of the play. In the fifth act, Queen Isabel offers this emotional statement of her grief:

Ah, thou, the model where old Troy did stand;
Thou map of honour, thou King Richard's tomb,
And not King Richard; thou most beauteous inn,
Why should hard-favour'd grief be lodg'd in thee,
When triumph is become an alehouse guest?

(V.i.11-15)

The critic John Erskine Hankins, as the source of the phrase "the model where old Troy did stand," cites Proverbs xxv.28: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."⁵³ This does not appear to be an accurate interpretation of Shakespeare's line, bearing in mind the two encirclement metaphors that immediately follow. Newbolt is much closer to the truth when he argues that "Troy symbolised ruined greatness which only the outline of its walls is left to tell of."⁵⁴ Through its association with the grave and the "barren earth" at III.ii.153, "model" acquires the additional connotation of a "mould" which remains extant after the processes of decay have returned to dust man's mortal body. As such, it is indicative of Troy's walls rather than of "a city that is broken down, and without walls."

Since a number of European nations derived their origins from ancient Troy (the British from Brutus; the Italians from Aeneas; the Danes and Normans from Antenor), we might reasonably expect that the story of Troy would be of particular interest to them. The most famous of the secular English emblem books published in the sixteenth century, Geoffrey Whitney's A Choice of Emblemes (1586), has at least four cuts that relate in some way to Troy.⁵⁵ The destruction of that celebrated city could well be construed as a crime against legendary excellence, for, not only did the English commonly see in the saga of Troy the origins and greatness of their own race, but Trojan civilisation was considered a cultural, moral and military perfection.

With this in mind, let us return to the Queen's line, "Ah, thou the model where old Troy did stand." Assuming, for reasons already offered, that the line identifies Richard with the Trojan wall and that his tragedy is figured in terms of old Troy's inner destruction at the hands of the Greeks, we may observe that the significance of the Queen's image is both national and individual.

Our understanding of the "national" connotation of the old Troy image must be informed by an appreciation of the Tudors' very high estimation of Trojan worth. We must accept, as well, the commonly understood equation of king and kingdom which is given notable expression in this play (at II.i.95, for example). As Troy's walls embraced the jewel of Trojan civilisation, so Richard's regal body may be seen as embracing the jewel of England's heroic spirit. By its association with the loss of a great and ancient society, the mythology of the English fallen paradise aspires to a tragic dimension that might not otherwise have been within its reach. The reverberations are felt in the two metaphors that follow--Richard as a tomb and Richard as a beauteous inn occupied by grief. The theme of the king as an encircling receptacle is here re-emphasised with accumulating force. Far from embodying the glorious spirit of the English mythology, Richard's national body now harbours the decimation, spiritual nadir and grief of a lost English Eden.

On an individual plane, while Richard does, to some degree, revel in the "luxury of religious inwardness and resignation,"⁵⁷ it is hard to believe that the experience of deposition left him spiritually and mentally unscathed. That sense of inner destruction we feel in the mirror scene:

'Tis very true: my grief lies all within;
And these external manner of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortur'd soul.

(IV.i.295-8)

The individual's soul in the fallen world of England becomes

as the soul in the fallen world of the Bible. A tortured and silent prisoner trapped within a body whose fleshy walls are not able to reflect the inner decimation, the soul can only find its freedom in physical death. An emblem of Francis Quarles, published far too late to have influenced Shakespeare's usage, reveals a melancholy, human-formed soul trapped within the rib-cage of a smiling skeleton.⁵⁸ In a bizarre inversion of iconographic symbol, Quarles presents physical life as a skeleton and spiritual life as a human figure engaoled within the bony bars of mortality. Queen Isabel's words search for a similar, if less dramatic, effect. Coming, as it does, only nine lines after an allusion to Richard's journey to "Julius Caesar's ill-erected tower" (V.i.2), her Trojan reference evokes the picture of a physical wall encircling the desolation within.

Richard, himself, is not oblivious to the prospect and consequences of a fallen paradise. Robbed of his kingship and the subject of increasing physical confinement, Richard begins to acknowledge the certainty of the lost second Eden by redefining his own approach to the soul and spirituality. His praise of the English earth on his return from Ireland will be well remembered:

I weep for joy
To stand upon my kingdom once again.
Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,
Though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs.
As a long-parted mother with her child
Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,
So weeping-smiling greet I thee, my earth,
And do thee favours with my royal hands.

(III.ii.4-11)

And a few lines later:

This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones
Prove armed soldiers, ere her native King
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms.

(III.ii.24-6)

The earth as a mother, fruitful and friendly, is one of Gaunt's idioms for England's second paradise. Richard appeals to the same, identifying himself (albeit a little ambiguously) as the son of the earth and its indigenous king. But more than this, he credits the "ubiquitous symbol of earth,"⁵⁹ as Richard Altick has called it, with a certain moral quality, a "soul" perhaps, that enables it not only to distinguish but also to defend the righteous. The waves of soldiers Richard imagines the earth will spawn to protect his monarchy are a fanciful variation on the theme of a regenerating heroic spirit. Physical life and spiritual well-being are not contradictory in this native mythology. But, in the darkness that tends to envelop Richard's spontaneous flights of optimism, his understanding of "life" and "death" in spiritual and physical terms moves closer to that of the sixteenth century emblematisers and, in fact, closer to what we might consider a Biblical conception of the world after the Fall. In such a world, notions of physical life and spiritual life, as we have seen, are no longer complementary. King Richard expresses the disjunction of the two ideas in a number of ways. Worthy of note are his desire for a "new world's crown" at V.i.24 (in 3 Henry VI, at I.ii.29-30, Richard, afterwards Duke of Gloucester, observes of the earthly version: "How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown, / Within whose circuit is Elysium"); his "Christianisation" of some elements of Gaunt's eucumium at III.iii.145-53, culminating in a mocking surrender of "my large kingdom for a little grave, / A little little grave, an obscure grave" (lines 153-4); and, finally, his anticipation of spiritual freedom at the moment of death: "Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high; / Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die" (V.v.111-12). The earthly crown is rejected, the earth symbolises no longer a reproductive mother but a grave, and the soul becomes the mournful prisoner of life itself. Shakespeare's technique of adjusting figures of the English mythology to serve the anti-mythology--a mechanism made familiar in previous plays--is once again evidenced in Richard's expression of the lost paradise.

The most arresting figure of the English mythology and the anti-mythology schemata that Richard elects to utilise is that of Death. We are not able to talk of an explicit equation of Death and the English soldier, as we were in King John. The overriding air of pessimism and doom in Richard II apparently negates the search for a myth-hero or any of the imagistic accoutrements that might go with such a person. Death seems to have been all but monopolised by the anti-mythology, but this is not to suggest that its advent is always distasteful. Hearing of the return of Bolingbroke, the Queen actually recommends death because he "gently would dissolve the bands of life" (II.ii.71). Isabel's ideal Death, like Constance's "amiable lovely death" (King John III.iv.25), is certainly not the prancing ruffian of a typical danse macabre series or the fiend that Sir Walter Raleigh says "hateth and destroyeth man."⁶⁰ But he does have something in common with a rarer and gentler conception of Death as illustrated in, say, Holbein's print of "The Old Man"⁶¹ or in Georgette de Montenay's cut of an old man stepping out of a symbolically hollow world, assisted by a sympathetic-looking skeleton.⁶² In both these instances, it is old age and a willingness to die that makes Death less frightening--a similar notion may be deciphered in King Lear where, on occasions, it seems that death is a privilege rather than a right, a reward that must be earned by Lear and Gloucester through suffering. Such death, though, must always fall within the domain of the anti-mythology since the desire for life and the celebration of the same are crucial to the processes of the English mythology. Nonetheless, the more dramatic references to Death in the lost paradise aspire towards some degree of fear and threat. Here is King Richard:

for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,

As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and, humour'd thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!

(III.ii.160-70)

According to Matthew W. Black, editor of the New Variorum edition of the play, Douce (1807) was the first to suggest that the seventh print in Holbein's Imagines Mortis may have inspired these lines.⁶³ As observed in the chapter on King John, the cut in question reveals a personified Death preparing to lift the crown off the head of an unsuspecting emperor. Helen Morris, who seems unaware of Douce's observation, writes in her paper "Shakespeare and Dürer's Apocalypse" that Death as a skeleton "is clearly seen perching 'within the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples' of the Emperor."⁶⁴ It is unlikely, though, that Shakespeare's image is any more than suggestive of the print. Matthew Black, again in the New Variorum edition, cites Collier as making the point that "death is represented as taking off an emperor's crown; and not sitting and keeping his court in it" (p. 198), and Margaret Beck (p. 198) has similar reservations. Be this as it may, Dance of Death images do figure powerfully in the play:

My inch of taper will be burnt and done,
And blindfold death not let me see my son.

(I.iii.223-4)

I will despair, and be at enmity
With cozeving hope—he is a flatterer,
A parasite, a keeper-back of death,
Who gently would dissolve the bands of life,
Which false hope lingers in extremity.

(II.ii.68-72)

Cry woe, destruction, ruin, and decay—
The worst is death, and death will have his day.

(III.ii.102-3)

How now! what means death in this rude assault?

(V.v.105)

The first edition of Imagines Mortis was published by John Frellon at Lyons in 1538, and, by 1542, a third edition (Latin) had appeared.⁶⁵ The danse macabre was not the creation of Hans Holbein--its origins extend back to antiquity.⁶⁶ As an art form, it was popular in the Middle Ages, but its history need not be elucidated here. Emile Mâle⁶⁷ has made a detailed study of the Dance of Death in his work L'Art Religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France. And H. Noel Humphreys⁶⁸ has traced the probable medieval influences of the art form on Holbein's work in Hans Holbein's Dance of Death, though few would deny that the German artist raised the genre to a level of artistic excellence that is generally considered unsurpassed. Given Holbein's artistic prominence in the English court of Henry VIII, and the amazing popularity of Imagines Mortis in the sixteenth century, it seems quite probable that Shakespeare was acquainted with the work.

Pertinent to Shakespeare's usage is Holbein's unnerving sense of skeletal Death as an accepted figure within living society. In the first print of Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti, Death strums his lute on the edge of Eden, waiting, in hope, for the transgression that will bring about his awful dominance of a fallen world.⁶⁹ Thereafter, he mingles with the living, apparently unnoticed--a fearful and threatening reminder of Eden lost. He spends much of his time shadowing potential victims and, at the moment of death, he assails his subject in a spirit of grim humour and cruel determination. In Shakespeare's words, he allows a king "a breath, a little scene, / To monarchize, be fear'd" and then "Comes at the last, and with a little pin / Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!" Thomas Combe writes in 1593 that "The Prince, the poore, are laid in graues alike,"⁷⁰ and Andrew Willet, in Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una (1596), echoes these Biblical sentiments when he affirms "we are all of earthly traine, and must away."⁷¹ Richard's contempt for things earthly is reflected in his reference to the "hollow crown" in which the antic Death keeps his court. The word "hollow" is connected with falsehood as early as I.iv.9 when Aumerle describes to the king his "hollow

parting" with Hereford. It gathers a dark momentum through its association with the "hollow eyes of death" at II.i.270, and with the grave at III.ii.140, and may be related to the notion of the hollow womb in the fallen English paradise. By the time it serves Richard's antic Death allusion, it has been well established as a key term in the nomenclature of a fallen English Eden.

It has become customary to remark upon Richard's strange "victory" in the closing scenes of the play. Harold F. Folland believes that "Richard, behind and through his apparently helpless self-dramatization, continues to fight his case against Bolingbroke so as to achieve a moral victory which has enduring political consequences. And in passing the royal power on to Henry, Richard subtly alters its character by dimming its numinous light."⁷² Lois Potter is of the view that, even in death, "Richard dominates the scene in his silence as he had dominated it before with words."⁷³ The case for Richard's verbal triumph is particularly persuasive in the deposition scene, where Richard consistently trumps awkward attempts to discredit him, responding to his captivity with a blend of defiance and wit:

God save the King! Will no man say amen?

Am I both priest and clerk? Well then, amen.

(IV.i.172-3)

BOLING. Are you contented to resign the crown?

K.RICH. Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be;

Therefore no no, for I resign to thee.

(IV.i.200-2)

BOLING. Name it, fair cousin.

K.RICH. Fair cousin! I am greater than a king;

For when I was a king, my flatterers

Were then but subjects; being now a subject,

I have a king here to my flatterer.

Being so great, I have no need to beg.

(IV.i.304-9)

BOLING. Go, some of you convey him to the Tower.

K.RICH. O, good! Convey! Conveyers are you all,
That rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall.

(IV.i.316-18)

Lurking on the periphery of Bolingbroke's new court, Richard scoffs at its pomp, ridicules its usurped authority, deflects its censure. In a scene that witnesses the "official" transference of power or, in loyalist terms, the ceremonial fall of paradise, the significance of Richard's presence to the rebel assemblage perhaps has something in common with Hans Holbein's smiling, skeletal Death shadowing Adam in the world after the Fall. Within two scenes, Bolingbroke must endure the indignity of an abortive attempt on his life and, a scene after that, the irony of the Duchess of York's grateful praise: "A god on earth thou art" (V.iii.136). If murderous conspiracy aimed at his life proves nothing else, it demonstrates that Bolingbroke is in no way immune to the machinations of the world, lacking both the omnipotent power and the immortality of the Duchess' "god on earth." Standing in his court, mocking his majesty with world-weary humour, Richard, like a skeleton of former glory, both reminds us of what Bolingbroke is yet to become and figuratively, as Death the antic jester, confirms an Hebraic scheme of the fallen world--a scheme once muted by the repetitive, and therefore death-defying, greatness of the English mythology. Bolingbroke may applaud his new order, but it is an order irresistibly claimed by the anti-mythology whose grim inversions will reduce great aspirations to futile regrets.

Holinshed provides a number of different accounts of King Richard's death, including the rumour that he "was tantalised with food and starved to death."⁷⁴ It is revealing that the dramatist should select the story that he was murdered by Sir Pierce of Exton. Though Richard may achieve a revelatory understanding of his own mortality, such knowledge can do little to mitigate the surprise and horror of his own death. His final moments are a frenetic far-cry from the gentle expiry of old Lear. The dramatic scenario Richard had constructed for himself at III.iii.160-70 finds a grim fulfilment in a

murder that, for its violent movement, has much in common with the grotesque animation of the Dance of Death itself. As Exton enters, Richard's cry of "How now! what means death in this rude assault?" (V.v.105) would grace the lips of many a danse macabre victim striving vainly to elude the skeletal grasp in Holbein's series. In the undignified battle for life in the Pomfret cell, and in the stark symbol of the coffin in the last scene of the play, Shakespeare's visual designs become theatrical emblems in a vast and tragic mythology of English paradise lost.

Richard II

Notes

¹ Thomas Stocker in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" to his own translation of Philips van Marnix van Sant Aldegonde's A Tragicall Historie of the troubles and Ciuile Warres of the lowe Countries, otherwise called Flanders (John Kyngston for Tobie Smith, 1583), sig. A2^r. Marnix van Sant Aldegonde's work first appeared on the continent in 1579.

² The line is to be found in Bingham's prefatory poem to G. Peckham's A Trve Reporte, Of the late discoueries, and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the New-found Landes (J. Charlewood for John Hinde, 1583), p. 10.

³ Pointed out by Edward Surtz, ed., Utopia (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 59n, who quotes Erasmus as saying that More's Utopia "represented chiefly Britain" (Ep. 4.21).

⁴ Cited by Peter Ure in his Arden edition of King Richard II, 5th ed. (1961; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1975), note to II.i.42.

⁵ The quotation is from "The Epistle Dedicatorie" to Silvester Jourdan's A Plaine Description of the Barmvdas, now called Sommer Ilands (1610, first publ.; W. Stansby for W. Welby, 1613), sig. A3^r.

⁶ Stocker, trans., A Tragicall Historie of the troubles and Ciuile Warres of the lowe Countries, sig. A2^v.

⁷ Quoted by Peter Ure, ed., King Richard II, in his note to II.i.42.

⁸ The scheme is discussed by John E. Hankins in his paper "Spenser and the Revelation of St. John," PMLA, 60 (1945), 364-81.

⁹ Du Bartas. His Diuine Weekes And Workes with A Compleate

Collectiō of all the other most delight-full Workes, trans. Joshua Sylvester (1605, first publ.; Robert Young, 1633), p. 133. Pollard and Redgrave, in A Short-Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640, list the date of publication of the edition we have used here as 1632.

¹⁰ "Two Passages in Sylvester's Du Bartas and their Bearing on Shakespeare's Richard II," Notes and Queries, 198 (1953), 374-77.

¹¹ "Britain Among The Fortunate Isles," Studies in Philology, 53 (1956), p. 117.

¹² Shakespeare's Imagery (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), p. 238.

¹³ Icones Historiarvm Veteris Testamenti, ed. Henry Green (1547; facsimile rpt. Manchester: A. Brothers, for the Holbein Society, 1869), sig. Bl^v. This book portraying Old Testament figures was first published at Lyon in 1538.

¹⁴ The Bible: That Is, The Holy Scriptures conteined in the Old and New Testament (Robert Barker, 1603). This is the Genevan version. Genesis iii.17: "Also to Adam he said, Because thou hast obeyed the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree (whereof I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eate of it) cursed is the earth for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the dayes of thy life." And Genesis iii.19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou returne to the earth: for out of it wast thou taken, because thou art dust, and to dust shal thou returne."

¹⁵ Giovanni Battista Lambi, A Revelation of the Secret Spirit, trans. R.N.E. (John Haviland for H. Skelton, 1623), p. 2.

¹⁶ See Arthur B. Chamberlain, Hans Holbein The Younger (George Allen & Co. Ltd., 1913), II, 186.

¹⁷ Chamberlain, Hans Holbein The Younger, I, 228.

¹⁸ Emblemata Moralia et Oeconomica, De Rervm Vsv et Abvsu (1579, first publ.; Arnheim: Apud Ioannem Iansonium Bibliopolam ibidem, sumptibus Theodori Petri Bibliopolae Amstelrodamiensis,

1609), sig. El^v.

19 Emblemata (Impressvm Francoforti ad Moenvm, per Ioannem Feyerabendt, Impensis Sigismundi Feyerabendii, 1581), p. 50.

20 De Rervm Vsv et Abvsy (Antwerpiae apud Christophorum Plantinum, 1585), p. 19. This is a translation of Bernard Gerbrand Furmer's work of the same name which first appeared in 1575.

21 Les Devises Heroiques, De M. Claude Paradin, Chanoine de Beaujeu, Du Seigneur Gabriel Symeon, & autres Auteurs (1551, first publ.; Anvers: De l'Imprimerie de Christophe Plantin, 1561), p. 151^r.

22 The emblem is reproduced by Henry Green in Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers (Trübner & Co., 1870), p. 530.

23 Emblemata, cum aliquot nummis antiqui operis, Ioannis Sambuci Tirnaviensis Pannonii (Antwerpiae: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1564), p. 240.

24 Emblemas Morales (Segovia: Impresso por Iuan de la Cuesta, 1591), p. 194 and p. 252. The work was first printed in 1589.

25 A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne (1635), ed. Rosemary Freeman (Columbia, S.C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1975), p. 21.

26 "Britain Among The Fortunate Isles," p. 123.

27 Historia Britonum, ed. J.A. Giles (D. Nutt, 1844), p. 2. G. H. Gerould, in his article "King Arthur and Politics," Speculum, 2 (1927), p. 34, believes that Geoffrey issued his history between 1136 and 1138.

28 Raphael Holinshed, The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles (Published at the expenses of J. Harison, G. Bishop, R. Newberie, H. Denham and T. Woodcocke, 1587), p. 3.

29 See W.H.D. Rouse's translation of De Rerum Natura, 3rd ed. revised by Martin Ferguson Smith (1937; rpt. William Heinemann Ltd., 1975), V.258-60 and 783-820.

30 Sylvester, trans., Du Bartas. His Diuine Weekes And Workes,

p. 133 ("The Colonies").

31 "Symphonic Imagery in Richard II," PMLA, 62 (1947),
p. 346.

32 A few examples will perhaps serve to demonstrate the dramatist's interest in this imagistic direction. In 1 Henry VI, Mortimer talks of those who "laboured to plant the rightful heir" (II.v.80). York, in 2 Henry VI, vows to "reap the harvest" (III.i.381) sown by the ambitious Jack Cade. In 3 Henry VI, Warwick insists "I'll plant Plantagenet, root him up who dares" (I.i.48), Richard describes how Clifford "set his murd'ring knife unto the root" (II.vi.49) of Rutland, and King Edward tells his son that "of our labours thou shalt reap the gain" (V.vii.20). These themes extend into Richard III where, for instance, Richard is described as a "rooting hog" (I.iii.228), and the Duke of Buckingham predicts that "Though we have spent our harvest of this king, / We are to reap the harvest of his son" (II.ii.115-6).

33 The Plays and Poems of George Chapman, ed. Thomas Marc Parrott (George Routledge & Sons, 1914), p. 447.

34 John Erskine Hankins, Shakespeare's Derived Imagery (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1953), p. 157, cites an interesting parallel in La Primaudaye's The French Academie: "If we consider how our common mother the earth, being prodigal in giuing vnto vs all things necessary for the life of man, hath notwithstanding cast all of vs naked out of her bowels, and must receiue vs so againe into her wombe, I see no great reason wee haue to call some rich, and others poore; seeing the beginning, being, and ende of the temporall life of all men are vnlike in nothing, but that some during this little moment of life haue that in abundance and superfluitie, which others haue onely according to their necessitie." Though, as Hankins suggests, this may be the immediate source of the Earth as Mother theme, La Primaudaye's emphasis on material wealth, or the lack of it, does not reflect the context of Shakespeare's Mother-Earth usage.

35 "The Sun-King Analogy in Richard II," Shakespeare Quarterly,

11 (1960), p. 321.

³⁶ The Gardener talks of the "wasteful king" (III.iv.55) and compares Richard to an incompetent husbandman who ought to have taken more care of his garden. Bolingbroke, an act earlier, is openly bitter that his rights and royalties have been snatched from him and given to "upstart unthrifths" (II.iii.122), and describes Bushy, Bagot, and their accomplices as "The caterpillars of the commonwealth, / Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away" (II.iii.166-7).

³⁷ For the idea of Richard as a martyr, see John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (Macmillan and Co., 1945), p. 118; Karl F. Thompson, "Richard II, Martyr," Shakespeare Quarterly, 8 (1957), 159-66; Donald M. Friedman, "John of Gaunt and the Rhetoric of Frustration," ELH, 43 (1976), 279-99.

³⁸ The idea of the Sun-King identity has been explored by many critics: Paul Reyher, "Le Symbole du Soleil dans la tragédie de Richard II," Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes, 40 (1923), 254-60; Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 233-38; Samuel Kliger, "The Sun Imagery in Richard II," Studies in Philology, 45 (1948), 196-202; Wolfgang Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (Methuen & Co., 1951), p. 59.

³⁹ Guillaume de La Perrière, The Theater of fine devices, containing an hundred morall emblemes, trans. Thomas Combe (1593, first publ.; R. Field, 1614), Emblem X. La Perrière's original French edition first appeared on the continent in 1539.

⁴⁰ Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, tam accurate congestus, vt nihil penè in eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latinè complectatur amplissimus Stephani Thesaurus, vel Anglicè, toties aucta Eliotae Bibliotheca (1565, first publ.; John Torkington, 1584), sig. 7A2^r.

⁴¹ M.M. Reese writes in The Cease of Majesty (Edward Arnold, 1961), p. 262: "Stylistically Richard II and King John are linked in several ways, notably in the marked absence of prose, but also there are striking differences." And E.A.J. Honigmann,

ed., King John, 4th ed. (1954; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973),

42 The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays (London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978), p. 135.

43 The Celestial Brides: A Study in Mythology and Archaeology (Stockbridge, Mass.: Herbert Reichner, 1978), p. 2.

44 Delia (J. Charlwood for Simon Waterson, 1592), sig. G2^v.

45 The Civile Wares betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke (1595, first publ.; Simon Waterson, 1609), Bk. I, st. 67.

46 Holinshed, The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles, p. 3: "Now to speake somewhat also of Neptune as by the waie (sith I haue made mention of him in this place) it shall not be altogither impertinent. Wherefore you shall understand, that for his excellent knowledge in the art of nauigation (as nauigation then went) he was reputed the most skilfull prince that liued in his time. And therefore, and likewise for his courage & boldnesse in aduenturing to and fro, he was after his decease honoured as a god, and the protection of such as trauelled by sea committed to his charge."

47 Holinshed, The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles, p. 4. Neptune apparently wished to see his thirty-three sons (of whom Lestrigo was one) occupy the great kingdoms of the world.

48 For a full account of Neptune's career see J. Lemprière, Lemprière's Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors, rev. F.A. Wright (1949; rpt. London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), "Neptunus." Lemprière first published his dictionary in 1788.

49 Homer, The Iliad, trans. E.V. Rieu (1950; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), p. 392.

50 The words are attributed to Richard by Edward Hall in The Vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke (Richard Grafton, 1548), fol. 6^r.

51 "Sun and Water Imagery in Richard II: Its Dramatic Function,"

Shakespeare Quarterly, 21 (1970), p. 158.

52 Thomas Combe, trans., The Theater of fine devices, Emblem LVII.

53 Shakespeare's Derived Imagery, p. 217. In The Bible: That Is, The Holy Scriptures (Genevan version), the same verse reads as follows: "A man that refraineth not his appetie is like a city which is broken downe & without wals" (Proverbs xxv.28).

54 Quoted by Peter Ure, ed., King Richard II, note to V.i.11.

55 A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586), pp. 30, 37, 45 and 163.

56 In recognition of Old Troy's excellence, Henry Peacham, in Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroical Devices (Wa. Dight, 1612), p. 34, expounds the valour of Trojan youth in battle and proposes, as well, the greatness of Trojan culture and art. In the same work, William Leigh writes of a vision in which he saw a Nymph dressed in white and mourning on the ruins of Troy, "So grieu'd to see that Britaine should enjoy / Her Pallas, whom she held and honour'd so" (sig. B4^r). The British acquisition of Troy's Pallas is a coup indeed!

57 G. Wilson Knight, Shakespeare's Dramatic Challenge (Croom Helm, 1977), p. 32.

58 Emblemes (printed for J. Williams, and sold by William Grantham, 1634), p. 272.

59 "Symphonic Imagery in Richard II," p. 343.

60 Sir Walter Raleigh: Selections from his Writings, edited with an introduction and notes, by G.E. Hadow (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917), p. 116. The extract is from The Historie of the World (1614, first publ.).

61 See Hans Holbein, The Dance of Death, introduction and notes by James M. Clark (Phaidon Press Ltd, 1947), in which "The Old Man" print from the 1538 Lyon edition is reproduced on p. 71.

62 Georgette de Montenay, Emblematvm Christianorvm Centvria

(1571, first publ.; Tigvri apud Christophorum Froschouerum, 1584), p. 89^r.

⁶³ Matthew W. Black, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Life and Death of King Richard the Second (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1955), p. 198.

⁶⁴ "Shakespeare and Dürer's Apocalypse," Shakespeare Studies, 4 (1968), p. 252.

⁶⁵ Arthur B. Chamberlain, in Hans Holbein The Younger, I, 212-14, lists some of the many editions of the Imagines Mortis that appeared in various parts of Europe in the sixteenth century. It is worth noting that the work was originally (1538) called Les Simulachres & Historiees Faces de la Mort, avtant elegammet pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginées, but by the end of the sixteenth century it was already popularly known by the Dance of Death title.

⁶⁶ Pierre Quoniam, Le Louvre (Paris: Editions des Musées Nationaux, 1977), p. 30, describes a first century A.D. goblet, in the Musée de Louvre, which has a Dance of Death motif on its outer surface.

⁶⁷ L'Art Religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1908), pp. 375-422.

⁶⁸ Hans Holbein's Dance of Death (Bernard Quaritch, 1868), p. 5.

⁶⁹ See Henry Green, ed., Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti, sig. Bl^r.

⁷⁰ Thomas Combe, trans., The Theater of five devices, Emblem XXVII.

⁷¹ Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una, quae tam ad exemplum apte expressa sunt, & ad aspectum pulchre depingi possunt, quam quae aut a veteribus accepta, aut inventa ab aliis hac extant (ex off. J. Legate, 1596?), sig. F2^r.

⁷² "King Richard's Pallid Victory," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), p. 390.

⁷³ "The Antic Disposition of Richard II," Shakespeare Survey,

27 (1974), p. 41.

⁷⁴ Quoted by Geoffrey Bullough in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, III (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 413.

Henry IV

The paucity of significant mythological allusion in the Henry IV plays is puzzling. There is, as James Hoyle¹ has shown, a profusion of emblematic imagery, but such imagery is dominantly proverbial in character. Danse macabre, Paradise and Fall, and Neptune themes, powerfully evoked in Richard II, are here absent or, at most, greatly diminished in stature. And refuge may not be sought in chronological climes for the most recent research places all four plays of the Lancastrian tetralogy in the prolific second phase of Shakespeare's career (1594-1599). It appears that King John stands at a fork in the dramatist's dramatic and thematic intentions--a fork whose two arms, Richard II and Henry IV, represent separate attempts to refine particular aspects of the English mythology and the anti-mythology. Richard II reworks and develops many of the motifs expressed in King John, but pointedly avoids any clear exploration of the earlier work's myth-hero innuendoes. It is perhaps more than coincidence, then, that in Henry IV we are presented with a quest for mythic identity, the nature and effect of which this chapter will purpose to examine.

Contemporary criticism has produced two papers that tackle the question of Hal as hero from mythological standpoints. Douglas J. Stewart sees Falstaff as the Centaur Chiron grooming his young protégé in ways normally observed by aspiring heroes in Greek myth.² James Black understands the mock heroics and absurd mythologisations of Falstaff and other low life figures as parodies of true heroic action--parodies that carefully lay the groundwork "for Prince Hal ultimately to assume the stature of England's hero."³

By titling his article "Falstaff the Centaur," Douglas Stewart supposes a figurative identification that Shakespeare's text does not support. There is, in fact, no equation, merely a parallel. And Stewart himself concedes he does not mean to suggest that Shakespeare "consciously modelled the Hal-Falstaff

relationship on this aspect of Greek myth," but that "he more or less 'felt' his way to substantially the same view of how a hero's early years should be spent."⁴ Unfortunately, there is the key difficulty of relating Falstaff's drunken rowdiness to the more formal elements of Centaurial education. The explanation is intriguing: "Naturally Falstaff is a centaur of British extraction--rather more for booze and noise, rather less for sex or science. A prototype of the ungovernable university don, alloyed with the half-beast of the Greek mountains, he teaches his pupil something about the range of human behavior he will meet in adult life."⁵ It has to be said that the absence of any overt allusion to Chiron the Centaur in connection with Falstaff is always a little worrying.

In contrast, James Black's thesis is extremely persuasive. Noticing the many references to great warriors and soldier-statesmen in 2 Henry IV, Black demonstrates that Falstaff parodies the pattern of heroism established by Hotspur in 1 Henry IV. The great names that are constantly on the fat rogue's lips sustain a mock-epic strain, and Falstaff "maintains his heroic pose to the very end, when Hal diminishes him as thoroughly as he diminished Hotspur."⁶ The discussion is extended to include the words and actions of that even more egregious counterfeit Pistol, and of Justice Shallow and Prince John. An interesting observation, if not the paper's most important, is that "in spite of the fact that the play is filled with talk of heroic deeds, there is not one real military action" (p. 380). In this respect, the contrast with 1 Henry IV is remarkable but Black does not explore the dissimilarity, restricting his argument to the analytical precinct of 2 Henry IV. This chapter, in acknowledgment of Black's contribution to the idea of the myth-hero (though he does not use that term) in 2 Henry IV, will concentrate its own efforts on 1 Henry IV where differences of subject matter may perhaps elicit a correspondingly different approach, on Shakespeare's part, to the question of military counterfeiting.

The known sources of the Henry IV plays do not connect Harry Hotspur with Mars. Here is the young warrior in Shakespeare's

play:

They come like sacrifices in their trim,
And to the fire-ey'd maid of smoky war
All hot and bleeding will we offer them.
The mailed Mars shall on his altar sit
Up to the ears in blood.

(1 Henry IV IV.i.113-7)

This gory aspected Mars is one familiarly associated with the Roman Mars Ultor, "the Avenger." In The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction (1599), a truncated translation of Vincenzo Cartari's Le imagini de i dei gli antichi (1556), Richard Linche describes the figure of Death in the palace of Mars: "wherevpon a stately altar, he was offering sacrifices in goblets made with the skuls of men, and filled vp euen to the brim with humane bloud; which oblation was consecrated to god Mars, with coales of fire (which set on flame the sacrifice) fetcht from many Citties, Townes, and Holds, burnt and ruinated by tyrannie of the Warres."⁷ If Hotspur sees himself as some kind of "Death" figure, he is in no way related to the English Death-soldier of King John whose purpose it was to lay low the enemies of England. Civil war is a very different matter. That Hotspur should appeal to the Roman deity is not entirely surprising. A warrior-archetype whose uncompromising courage and inflexible diction are somewhat out of place amidst the dithering caution of his allies, young Percy invokes the mythic exemplar whose personal qualities most closely approximate his own. And perhaps the most telling similarity between this English rebel and the Classical Mars is the common failure to distinguish between foreign and civil war, a distinction that is crucial to the "Englished" Mars of much Elizabethan literature.

A Mars simile is apparently satisfactory when linked with foreign conquest, as when Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, "remembers" in The Mirror for Magistrates how "Lyke Mars God of warre enflamed with yre, / I forced the Frenchmen to abandon theyr bowers."⁸ Richard Argol even sees Mars as the astrological patron of warlike England: "For this our clime being subiect to Mars, although I know some iudg the moone chiefly to haue

dominatiō ouer vs, the people naturally must yeeld such effects,
as that mighty planet imprinteth in these inferiour bodies his
subiects. For as the heauens haue ruled old the earth, an
vnmoueable masse, with their beneficiall effects: so in this
our region, the fire of honour mounting by martiall prowes,
the chiefe aduancer of gentry, must of force so long last in
this nation, as matter minstred from aboue maintaineth it."⁹
The general tenor of Argol's whole discourse leaves us in no
doubt that "martiall prowes" is a quality to be won and exercised
in foreign climes. And here, too, is part of John of Gaunt's
panegyric in Richard II:

This royal throne of kings, this scept'red isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war
(II.i.40-4)

Gaunt's anglicised Mars is an integral element of a peaceful
England. Hotspur's Mars, by contrast, is not English at all.
He is the rash and bloody killer of Classical mythology and,
by that general definition, a patron of any kind of war, civil
or foreign. We may infer from Gaunt's claim that England is
a fortress built "by Nature" against the hand of war that he
considers civil butchery as being both unsavoury and unnatural.
Madeleine Doran has rightly remarked that the "idea of war on
English soil was evidently one which called forth from Shakespeare
an intense imaginative response."¹⁰ It is not difficult to see
why. Everyone despises civil war, but the Elizabethans' fear
of it, at times, verges on hysteria. Edward Hall underscores
civil war's unnaturalness when, in the opening paragraph of
his chronicle, he condemns "domestical discord & unnatural
controuersy."¹¹ Samuel Daniel, in "The Epistle Dedicatorie"
to his verse account of the civil war, purposes "to shewe the
deformities of Ciuile Dissension,"¹² and Thomas Lodge, in
The Wounds of Civil War (ca. 1588), draws, as the Elizabethans
were apt to do, on the precedent of Italy. The setting and
characters may be Roman, but the lesson on "unnaturalness" is

English:

Brute beasts will break the mutual law of love,
And birds affection will not violate;
The senseless trees have concord 'mongst themselves,
And stones agree in links of amity.¹³

Even in the face of Nature's precedent, men still persist in hostilities against their fellow countrymen.

Into this gruesome arena of bloody civil carnage comes the Classical war god Mars. No more the patron of English greatness, he is Daniel's "Muse-foe Mars" who should "abroade farre fostred bee,"¹⁴ and Geoffrey Whitney's grim lord of fiery terror:

When ciuill sworde is drawn out of the sheathe,
And bluddie broiles, at home are set a broache,
Then furious Mars with sworde doth rage beneath,
And to the Toppe, deuowring flames incroache,
None helpes to quenche, but rather blowes the flame,
And oile doe adde, and powder to the same.¹⁵

Hotspur's failure to distinguish between civil and foreign war is only one of the elements that serve to characterise him as a Classical Mars-type soldier. A cursory glance at the war god's attributes enables us to draw other parallels. An unrelenting and imprudent defender of old Troy, Mars was at one point drawn into personal combat with the Greek host, sustaining a famous injury at the hands of Diomedes.¹⁶ Percy, too, has a penchant for lost causes and, through his own rash exuberance, allows himself to be drawn into hopeless battle at Shrewsbury. But perhaps a more compelling link is to be found in the image of "fire" in a domestic context. "Fire" is the very essence of Whitney's Mars, and Giovanni Florio, an Italian living in London, calls this element one of the "daughters of war."¹⁷ Richard Linche, translating Cartari's description of the Classical deity, writes that "Mars was generally taken for that heat and warmeuesse which proceeded from the vertue of the Sun. By reason whereof, the liuely heat and bloud which is within vs, is easily set on fire & enflamed with anger, furie, and desire of warre: of which things Mars also is held and

supposed to be the god."¹⁸

Come, come, Lord Mortimer; you are as slow
As hot Lord Percy is on fire to go.

(III.i.263-4)

The land is burning; Percy stands on high

(III.iii.202)

I am on fire

To hear this rich reprisal is so nigh

And yet not ours.

(IV.i.117-19)

The link between Hotspur and Mars is made explicit in III.ii when the king talks of "this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes" (line 112). In at least one way, the ambiguity of this "Mars" reference is fitting for it tends to summarise the competing senses of heroic Englishness and Classical savagery that the character of Hotspur arouses within us. He is before rebellion an English Mars, and after a Roman Mars--a crazed but compelling military anachronism who gladly seeks vengeance and "reprisal" for the wrongs done to him.

In the course of 1 Henry IV, Shakespeare is at pains to present the need for a potential English hero, someone who can assume the mantle of a past greatness. The obvious candidates are Hotspur and Hal, and G.M. Pinciss synthesises a long tradition of critical thought that sees their dramatic opposition as "Central to any reading of 1 Henry IV."¹⁹ Nonetheless, before Shrewsbury, with Vernon's notable exception (IV.i.106), Hotspur all but monopolises heroic mythologisation. The king's metaphor "Mars in swathing clothes," in its suggestion of infancy, serves well the notion of a developing mythic identity. Percy is the potential Mars that King Henry wishes some night-tripping fairy had made his own (I.i.86-9), and that "spirit Percy" (II.iv.358) who ought to make Prince Hal "horribly afraid" (II.iv.359). Pitted against Hotspur's catalogue of praise, Hal must answer as the dissolute reveller who, as Norman Sanders²⁰ has shown, is verbally detached from his lineage by Henry and cast as the heir of Richard II, while the king himself styles

Hotspur as his own spiritual inheritor. To Sanders' argument that "Throughout the two plays, Shakespeare frequently lifts Hal out of his own person or transfers to another character some aspect of his identity" (p. 29), we might append our own contention that, in the person of Hal, the dramatist effects his grand scheme of the "hidden hero" who will ultimately emerge from infamy like Achilles from the obscurity of Scyros. By way of contrast, Hotspur is virtually advertised as an aspiring myth-hero from the early stages of the play. But, in truth, Shakespeare dooms his Percy--first by turning him into a Roman Mars figure and thereby positioning him as the enemy rather than the defender of England; second, by having him disavow Glendower's superhuman pretensions in III.i and then giving him claims before Shrewsbury that are equally absurd. As proof of the second point we need look no further than Act Four, scene one. At first daunted by the news of his father's unavailability (line 17), he has, within a few lines, persuaded himself that all is well (lines 36-7) and, by the end of the scene, has transformed himself into a Classical warrior battling heroically and victoriously in the shadow of his patron god. Even before he reaches Shrewsbury, he has imaginatively killed Hal and vanquished the king's army; he "will" offer his foes in sacrifice; Mars "shall" on his altar sit; the rich reprisal "is" nigh. The preconceived mythology is absolute, the diction inflexible. The "gods are immortall," Abraham Fraunce reminds us, "and cannot dye,"²¹ but Hotspur's life is as transient and fragile as that of any man on Shrewsbury field. Unwilling or unable to distinguish between actuality and fantasy, it is a measure of young Percy's tragedy that when he lies beaten and dying, only he seems genuinely surprised.

A Classical Martian identity, constructed with meticulous care, is unceremoniously shattered in a few moments of battlefield action at the end of 1 Henry IV. Defeat reduces Percy from the rôle of a god to that of a bogus self-mythologiser. In her bitter evocation of Hotspur's isolation at Shrewsbury, Lady Percy (speaking in 2 Henry IV) confirms the truth of her husband's mortality:

O miracle of men!--him did you leave--
Second to none, unseconded by you--
To look upon the hideous god of war
In disadvantage, to abide a field
Where nothing but the sound of Hotspur's name
Did seem defensible. So you left him.

(II.iii.33-8)

James Black suggests that in these lines, and in those preceding and following them, Lady Percy "apotheosizes him [Hotspur] as the model of valour and conduct."²² It is surely inappropriate to talk of "apotheosis" in a passage that clearly emphasises Hotspur's brittle manhood at Shrewsbury. A miracle of men he may be, but still a man. And the would-be Classical warrior who had once sworn faith in the Roman Mars, now becomes the human prey of what is now the "hideous god of war." No longer the eager soldier, he is the forsaken victim, the fragile mortal forced to "abide" the nightmare of Shrewsbury. The Martian mythology has not been abandoned, it has simply been adjusted by Lady Percy to accommodate the reality of Hotspur's defeat. And in making excuses for him, Lady Percy implicitly, and unconsciously, de-mythologises her hero. He was outnumbered, he was disadvantaged, he was betrayed, he needed help. All true, no doubt, but Percy's part in his own demise remains unalterable. The "hideous god of war" is no more than an ironic metaphor for those aspiring but essentially destructive forces that lie within Hotspur's own character. His rash optimism, his fiery haste, his foolish valour--these, together, compose the "psychological" Mars that pulls him like some irresistible magnet to Shrewsbury and yet, at the last, gives the lie to his bogus mythology in denying him victory and the sanctuary of immortality.

Mars is not the only deity whose aid Hotspur petitions:

They come like sacrifices in their trim,
And to the fire-ey'd maid of smoky war
All hot and bleeding will we offer them.
The mailed Mars shall on his altar sit
Up to the ears in blood.

He appeals, as well, to the "fire-ey'd maid of smoky war." A.R. Humphreys,²³ following Cowl and John Dover Wilson, identifies the maiden as Bellona, goddess of war and sometime wife/sister of Mars. Shakespeare appears to be aware of the tradition of Bellona as Mars' wife in Macbeth where he has Ross describe the war-gloried Macbeth as "Bellona's bridegroom" (I.ii.55). Given the matrimonial tie, it is worth asking why the dramatist talks of the "fire-ey'd maid of smoky war" in 1 Henry IV. The solution may be that Bellona is not intended at all. Thomas Cooper (1584) records that, in Classical legend, Minerva (Pallas), goddess of war and wisdom, was thought "to haue obserued perpetual virginitie."²⁴ A similar remark is made by Abraham Fraunce in The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch (1592) where he explains the birth of Minerva: "Vulcan with an axe of Adamant, did cut Iupiters head, whence Pallas proceeded, a pure and spotles Virgin. A Virgin; for, wantonnes and wisdomes can neuer agree."²⁵ And R.K. Root has intimated that Hotspur's reference is probably to Minerva, noting that "Chapman calls her 'war's triumphant maid' in Il. 7, and the epithet 'fire-ey'd' corresponds to Homer's epithet 'glaukopis.'"²⁶ Root's case for Minerva is persuasive but must be qualified on two counts. In the first place, "fire-ey'd" could relate to the tradition, recited by Cartari, that Bellona was "most commonly depicted with a flaming firebrand in her hand."²⁷ Secondly, the kind of mood Hotspur is in at the time of his utterance, and in the play generally, leans more to Bellona's bloody exuberance than Minerva's cautioned wisdom: "By Minerua was vnderstood and intended the wise counceles and aduised prudencie of Captaines and Officers, in managing their military affaires: and by Bellona were meant all bloudie stratagems, massacres, surprises, executions, and fatall meetings of the enemie whatsoever."²⁸

The position is further complicated by a mythological phenomenon that has gone unnoticed by editors. Giovanni Boccaccio's Genealogie (1531) observes that Tully "affirme icelle minerue auoir este inuêteresse & princesse de'guerre. Et a ceste cause elle est appelee paulcus Bellone et seur de mars."²⁹ And Fraunce himself equates Minerva and Bellona,

"though some distinguish them making Pallas to note policie in wars; and Bellona, blood, slaughter, murder, and destruction."³⁰

In view of the special relation Minerva has to the English realm, a relation that will be explored presently, an English hero ought to appeal to her. But, while Hotspur's heroism is not in doubt, his patriotism is pointedly disavowed by his promotion of civil war. In not naming the goddess to whom his Percy appeals, Shakespeare allows himself the opportunity to emphasise the dual potential of the female identity in relation to England's well-being, in the same way that the ambivalence of Mars (on the one hand, a Classical deity whose warring nature bodes universal ill, and, on the other, an anglicised god whose specific function it is to defend and inspire English greatness) harbours two very different possibilities for the realm. To understand this fully, we must look to the particularly English relationship devised for Minerva and Mars by some historians and mythographers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For these writers, the goddess Minerva becomes a kind of sister figure, wisely directing the frenetic zeal of her adopted brother Mars to ends that best suit the interests of England. At home, Mars is an insuperable defender of England against foreign invasion, abroad he becomes a metaphor for the furious English conqueror. Gerard Leigh, in The Accedence of Armorie, styles Mars as one of Pallas' knights: "So haue you her Knightes, an armed Mars, A Champion polittique in fielde to fight, or at home to defende, An ordered Iusticer without respecte."³¹ In William Wyrley's The Trve Vse of Armorie a soldier boasts of his military standing: "For highly was my knightly service deemd / As well for Mars as prudent Pallas grace."³² And Baptiste Starre, in a prefatory poem of praise, asks, of the Mars-like soldier Barnaby Rich:

If due deserte should reape rewarde,
Or worthie merrit, guerdon haue:
Why should not Riche presse forth hym self,
The louely laurell croune to craue:
Whose life in fielde that wonne hym praise,
He leades at home in Pallas waies.³³

So, too, Henry Peacham, in Minerva Britannia, confirms that

Though Mars defendes the kingdome with his might,
And braues abroad his foe, in glorious armes,
Yet wiser Pallas guides his arme aright,
And best at home preuentes all future harmes³⁴

This harmony is not at all in keeping with a more familiar tradition of antiquity that pits the measured strategy of Minerva against the folly of Mars--a contest that invariably ends in the discomfiture of the latter.

In view of Hotspur's bloody breach of precepts dear to the Mars-Minerva scheme of English greatness--concord amongst Englishmen, fidelity to an anglicised Mars--it seems clear that his "fire-ey'd" maiden complements Classical Mars in a perversion of that heroic unity expressed by Leigh, Wyrley, Starre and Peacham. In the final analysis, it matters not who she is, but what she represents. And in Hotspur's mind the representation is forebodingly Classical. The subversion of great qualities into malignant domains is a mechanism we have come to associate with the anti-mythology. What ought to have been Henry Peacham's "Minerva Britannia" is blindly devalued by the rebellious Percy into a Romanised goddess of blood, death and fire, holding a fearsome sway in the English realm. The "sacrifices" (IV.i.113) he offers to her figuratively embody the fall from heroic English values to a barbaric pagan ethic.

With Hotspur dead, the process of rebellion perpetuates itself in the form of the dissident Archbishop of York:

But, as I told my Lord of Westmoreland,
The time misord'red doth, in common sense,
Crowd us and crush us to this monstrous form
To hold our safety up. I sent your Grace
The parcels and particulars of our grief,
The which hath been with scorn shov'd from the court,
Whereon this hydra son of war is born;

(IV.ii.32-8)

Schmidt takes "hydra son of war" to mean "War, this son of hydra"³⁵--an interpretation that seems unsatisfactory because

it fails to take into full account the reproductive qualities of the Classical Hydra of Lerna, qualities that are almost always evident in Elizabethan proverbial usage of the figure. The last Arden editor of 2 Henry IV reads the phrase as "Hydra-like offspring, war,"³⁶ which appears to be a valid solution. Even so, the insistent use of the first person singular and plural in the quoted passage suggests a third possibility. The "hydra son" is perhaps the Archbishop himself and the full military force under his command, both of whom have been bred by the cyclical processes of civil war. At any rate, two points look to be of significance here. Firstly, the Archbishop posits the idea of civil dissent as a "monstrosity" (line 34), reminding us of that unnatural quality with which we have already seen it associated; and, secondly, he defines the monstrosity as hydraic.

Before continuing, we must look more closely at Renaissance interpretation of the Hydra and Hercules. The offspring of Typhon and Echidna (co-authors of Cerberus, the Sphinx, and the Nemean Lion), the Hydra of Lerna was no ordinary monster. Thomas Cooper describes it as "A moster, with whom Hercules fought, and as soone as he had stricken of one head of the monster, an other sprang vp immediately."³⁷ With fatal breath and heads that multiplied when severed, the subjugation of this serpent was arguably Hercules' most difficult task and the only one that necessitated outside assistance. Opinions differ as to the number of heads the beast possessed. Spenser talks of "his thousand heads,"³⁸ Cooper of "an hundred neckes with serpentine heads,"³⁹ Combe of a "seuen-headed beast."⁴⁰ The precise figure is not overly important. What is of significance, though, is the notion of a specific moral evil reviving and multiplying from one wicked generation to the next. Edmund Spenser writes of the "hell-borne Hydra" whose heads, when cropped, "still new / Forth budded, and in greater number grew."⁴¹ To the print of Hercules battling the Hydra, Thomas Combe appends these lines:

When Hercules had ordaind to take his rest,
And from his former labours him withdrew,
Hydra that monstrous seuen-headed beast
Against him came, his troubles to renew.⁴²

Hercules who cuts off the heads with one hand and sears the wounds himself with a burning brand in the other.

York's theme of the monster regenerating is one which has already been well prepared. As early as II.iv of 1 Henry IV the dramatist had presented us with Falstaff's remarkable parody of heroic action in his account of the Gadshill fiasco. What begins as "two rogues in buckram suits" (line 184) grows to four (lines 188-9), then to seven (line 194), then to nine (line 204) and ends as a veritable army of eleven men in buckram (line 210) all assailing the beleaguered hero. As if to lend weight to the hydraic nuance, Sir John pointedly brags in the same scene "Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules" (lines 261-2), recalling at once the mythic hero's defeat of the Hydra of Lerna as the second of the twelve tasks imposed upon him by Eurystheus. Further, the monster motif is constantly rekindled in one form or another throughout the scene. The Prince twice inveighs "O monstrous!" (lines 211 and 519), both in connection with Falstaff. Bardolph confesses at lines 303-4 (of Falstaff) "I blush'd to hear his monstrous devices"; and then, at lines 465-6, cries out that "the sheriff with a most monstrous watch is at the door" (significantly, this new monster also seeks a confrontation with the "Herculean" Falstaff, but for reasons that cast a suitable irony on the paradigm's mythic pretensions!)

The notion of the regenerating foe is echoed in other areas of the Henry IV plays. Falstaff again touches comically on the point when, in claiming to have killed Hotspur, he warns Hal: "There is Percy [throwing the body down]; if your father will do me any honour, so; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself" (1 Henry IV V.iv.137-40). And this in the aftermath of that extraordinary episode in which he decides to "re-kill" Percy's corpse (V.iv.110-128). Imagistically, it is interesting that, in both plays, the word "head" accumulates an hydraic connotation through its double significance. So it is that Worcester urges the rebel quarter "To save our heads by raising of a head" (1 Henry IV I.iii.284); and Hotspur promises, at one point, to "make a hazard of my head" (I.iii.128) and insists,

at another, that he "can make a head / To push against a kingdom" (IV.i.80-1). This loss and growth of heads fits in well with the metaphor of the monstrous Classical serpent whose heads multiplied as fast as Hercules could lop them off. Samuel Daniel, in The Civile Wares, suggests a similar ambivalence in his description of the rivalry between Richard II and Bolingbroke: "Now risen is that Head, by which did spring / The birth of two strong Heads, two Crownes, two rights."⁴⁹ There are reasons to believe that Daniel has the Hydra in mind here. Firstly, in the lines that immediately follow, he talks of "That monstrous shape that afterward did bring / Deform'd confusion to distracted wights." The stress on monstrosity and deformity links well with the idea of two heads that "spring" from one in the previous lines. And, secondly, a book later the beast is explicitly mentioned in connection with Henry IV's reign: "But now (behold) other new heads appeare, / New Hidra's of rebellion, that procure / More worke to doo, and glue more cause of feare" (4.15). It is fair to say, though, that Daniel does not develop an Hydraic sense of "head" to the same extent as Shakespeare, and while Henry IV may derive the idea of the Lernean beast as a metaphor for the processes of civil war from Daniel's earlier work, the variety and coherence of Shakespeare's Hydra scheme entitles us to speak of its originality.

With this history of Hydraic nuance in mind, we are better equipped to reach a conclusion as to the moral implications of the Archbishop of York's Hydra comparison. While laying claim to genuine grievances, he also tacitly accepts the fundamental immorality of his rebellious actions by seeking identification with the mythical serpent. The notion of heroic human resurrection is thus dragged further into the mire of the anti-mythology. Inadvertently, York, the inheritor of Hotspur's dissentious spirit, returns to our theme of the myth hero by inviting the ascendancy of just such a figure to dare his monstrous rebellion. In some respects, it is strange that the rebel cause should acknowledge, in this peculiarly candid manner, the moral deficiencies that undermine its justification. But perhaps such honesty is preferable to the illusory moral

righteousness of a man like Douglas. The Scot is persistently revealed to us (as is Hotspur) as a man of myth-like properties.

and brave Archibald,
That ever-valiant and approved Scot
(I.i.53-4)

could the world pick thee out three such
enemies again as that fiend Douglas, that
spirit Percy, and that devil Glendower?
(II.iv.357-9)

What never-dying honour hath he got
Against renowned Douglas!
(III.ii.106-7)

And then Douglas himself:

As heart can think; there is not such a word
Spoke of in Scotland as this term of fear.
(IV.i.84-5)

Talk not of dying; I am out of fear
Of death or death's hand for this one half year.
(IV.i.135-6)

When, at last, he casts himself in the Herculean rôle of the Hydra subjugator, we might be a little disposed to accept him as such:

Another king! They grow like Hydra's heads.
I am the Douglas, fatal to all those
That wear those colours on them. What art thou,
That counterfeit'st the person of a king?
(V.iv.25-8)

Having killed the disguised Stafford and Blunt, he rounds on yet another king--this time the real one. But for all his surprise, his diction is in character. He is "the Douglas" as though the name is itself some kind of invincible talisman against the vagaries of the world. And he is "fatal" not to some but to "all those" dressed in the guise of the king.

As evidence of Shakespeare's conscious desire to have Douglas

cast himself in the rôle of Hercules, we may look once more to Daniel, whose influence on the text at other points seems significant, particularly in relation to the Hydra figure. Here is Daniel's description of the rebel Douglas at Shrewsbury:

For, Mars-like Douglas all his forces bent
T'incounter, and to grapple with the best;
As if disdayning any other thing
To doo, that day, but to subdue a King.⁵⁰

The Mars image is aimed at local effect, forming no part of a broader myth structure. But Shakespeare does not miss the chance to weave the idea of multiplying kings and Hydra-like subjugation into his mythic framework: "Another king! They grow like Hydra's heads." Not only does Daniel fail to attach an Hydraic tint to this historical anecdote of regenerating monarchy, but he actually denies even the possibility of inference by relating Douglas to Mars. Holinshed comes closer. He quotes Douglas as saying "I marvell to see so many kings thus suddenlie arise one in the necke of an other."⁵¹ This savours very much of the Hydra, but it is Shakespeare who purposely rejects Daniel's Mars simile and turns Holinshed's hint into an image of compelling power.

The manoeuvre is significant. In claiming for himself the Herculean rôle of the Hydra-conqueror, Douglas assumes not simply a military but a moral invincibility. The king has become the monster, the evil beast, and he the irresistible and goodly mythic hero who will vanquish him. It is, of course, all an illusion. As early as II.iv.332-4, Falstaff, a character whose joviality belies his importance to the mythological plan of 1 Henry IV, had lampooned the myth created around Douglas, talking of him as "that sprightly Scot of Scots, Douglas, that runs o' horseback up a hill perpendicular." Within twenty lines of Douglas' Herculean boast, Shakespeare presents us with the stage picture of the would-be myth-hero running for his life and, within a scene, we are given the ignominious details of his capture---"And falling from a hill, he was so bruis'd / That the pursuers took him" (V.v.21-2). As with Hotspur's Mars-myth, a verbal Herculean mythology is bestowed upon the

Scot after the heroic platform has been painstakingly prepared-- and then it is shattered in a few seconds at Shresbury. The failure of Douglas must be seen as the failure of a mythology that styles him as militarily and, perhaps more importantly, morally unassailable. In slandering the king as a counterfeit (V.iv.28) and vowing to slaughter his regenerating "heads" (V.iv.25-7), Douglas implicitly challenges Hal's right to accession, and presumes, as well, he has some moral obligation to assist the processes of civil war. Not only does Hal rescue his father from the grasp of Douglas in V.iv, but he also puts the Scot to flight. The Prince's threat is telling: "Hold up thy head, vile Scot, or thou art like / Never to hold it up again" (V.iv.39-40). The play on "head" turns Douglas into the Hydra monster, and Hal into the head-cropping Hercules. If Douglas' supposed military invincibility is a metaphor for moral uprightness, then Prince Hal's triumph over him figures, through the medium of a theatrical emblem, the hollow foundation of such a claim.

Shakespeare leaves us, at the end of 1 Henry IV, with two discredited heroes and the strong suspicion that these bogus mythographers have acted merely as a prelude to the emergence of the real myth-hero. The dramatist's use of Mars and Hercules as the Classical vehicles of false mythologisation is revealing. In different characters, Shakespeare represents the doomed desires of military superlative and moral invincibility--two qualities that, in their ideal form, ought to balance with wisdom in the body and mind of a single man. Hal's victory at the battle of Shrewsbury, where he slays Martian Hotspur and fights off Herculean Douglas, strongly suggests that he is the man destined to unite these properties in his glorious reign. But Shakespeare does not move directly to a dramatisation of that reign. He embarks, instead, on 2 Henry IV. There is no wide agreement on the reasons for his doing so, and critics⁵² have long been troubled by the precise nature of the relationship between the two Henry IV plays. From our mythological viewpoint, A.R. Humphreys' judgement that "Shakespeare seemingly intended two plays from the outset, or very near it"⁵³ feels right.

Though the mythologies of Hotspur and Douglas have been shattered, Falstaff's reputation is not only undiminished by the end of 1 Henry IV, but has actually been enhanced by the claim that he slew Hotspur--a claim that Hal does not refuse him. James Black's paper "Counterfeits of Soldiership in Henry IV" is convincing in its demonstration that the rejection of Falstaff "is a rejection not only of false justice or of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it also is a rejection of false heroics, of counterfeit honor."⁵⁴ If Hal is to reign unchallenged as England's myth-hero, the bogus mythology of Falstaff must be repudiated.

Henry IV

Notes

¹ "Some Emblems in Shakespeare's Henry IV Plays," ELH, 38 (1971), 512-27. Hoyle believes that there is "an emblematic and proverbial aspect to the imagery of Shakespeare's Henry IV plays that does not seem to have been adequately recognized" (p. 512).

² "Falstaff the Centaur," Shakespeare Quarterly, 28 (1977), 5-21.

³ "Counterfeits of Soldiership in Henry IV," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), p. 372.

⁴ Stewart, "Falstaff the Centaur," p. 5.

⁵ Stewart, "Falstaff the Centaur," pp. 20-1.

⁶ Black, "Counterfeits of Soldiership in Henry IV," p. 376.

⁷ The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction (1599; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), sigs. X1^r-X1^v.

⁸ The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. Lily B. Campbell (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1960), p. 93. The Mirror is believed to have been first published in 1555.

⁹ Argol is here writing in a prefatory address to the reader in Gerard Leigh's (sometimes Legh) The Accedence of Armorie (1562, first publ.; R. Tottel, 1591), sig. A5^v.

¹⁰ "Imagery in Richard II and in Henry IV," Modern Language Review, 37 (1942), p. 121.

¹¹ The Vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke (Richard Grafton, 1548), fol. 1^r.

¹² The Civile Wares betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke (1595, first publ.; Simon Waterson, 1609), sig. A2^v.

¹³ I.i.260-3. The text used is The Wounds of Civil War, ed. Joseph W. Houppert (Edward Arnold, 1969).

14 Samuel Daniel, Delia (J. Charlwood for Simon Waterson, 1592), sig. G2^v.

15 A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586), p. 7.

16 The incident is recalled in Henry Peacham's Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroycal Devices (W. Dight, 1612), sig. B3^r, when Heywood, in his note upon the author, speaks of Minerva breeding a second champion (that is, Henry Peacham) like Diomedes who dared to stand against Mars, wound Venus in the hand, defend alone the Argive fleet, and battle with the immortal gods.

17 Florio: His firste Fruites: which yeelde familiar speech, merie Prouerbes, wittie Sentences, and golden sayings (Thomas Dawson for Thomas Woodcocke, 1578), p. 39.

18 The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction, sig. V2^v.

19 "The Old Honour and the New Courtesy: 1 Henry IV," in Shakespeare Survey, 31 (1978), p. 85.

20 "The True Prince and the False Thief: Prince Hal and the Shift of Identity," Shakespeare Survey, 30 (1977), pp. 29-30.

21 The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch (1592; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 30^v.

22 "Counterfeits of Soldiership in Henry IV," p. 374.

23 A.R. Humphreys, ed., The First Part of King Henry IV, 6th ed. (1960; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1975), note to IV.i.114.

24 Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae tam accurate congestus, vt nihil penè in eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latinè complectatur amplissimus Stephani Thesaurus, vel Anglicè, toties aucta Eliotae Bibliotheca (1565, first publ.; John Torkington, 1584), sig. 7H6^r.

25 The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch, p. 40^r.

26 Classical Mythology in Shakespeare (1903; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1965), p. 86.

27 Richard Linche, trans., The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction, sig. S2^v.

28 Richard Linche, trans., The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction, sig. S2^v.

29 Genealogie (1531; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), fol. 101^v.

30 Abraham Fraunce, The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch, p. 40^v.

31 The Accedence of Armorie, fol. 129^v.

32 The Trve Vse of Armorie, Shewed by Historie, and plainly proued by example (J. Jackson for Gabriell Cawood, 1592), p. 131.

33 The poem appears in Barnaby Rich's Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession (J. Kingston for R. Walley, 1581), sig. C3^r.

34 Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroycal Devices, p. 44.

35 Quoted in A New Variorum Edition: The Second Part of Henry the Fourth, ed. M.A. Shaaber (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1940), p. 311.

36 See A.R. Humphreys, ed., The Second Part of King Henry IV, (1966; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), note to IV.ii.38. The 1977 reprint does not indicate how many Arden Shakespeare editions of the play preceded that of A.R. Humphreys.

37 Cooper describes the beast in Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, sig. 7G3^r.

38 From The Fairie Queene in The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser (William Pickering, 1839), IV, 6.12.32. This is the Aldine Edition.

39 Thomas Cooper, Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, sig. 7G1^r.

40 See Guillaume de La Perrière, The Theater of fine devices, containing an hundred morall emblemes, trans. Thomas Combe (1593, first publ.; R. Field, 1614), Emblem XCIX. The original

French edition appeared on the continent in 1539.

41 From The Fairie Queene (6.12.32) in The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, IV (Aldine Edition).

42 Thomas Combe, trans., The Theater of fine devices, Emblem XCIX.

43 The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch, p. 46^v.

44 A Knack to Know a Knave (1594; facsimile rpt. Oxford: The University Press, The Malone Society Reprints, 1963), sig. A2^r.

45 Guillaume de La Perrière, in The Theater of fine devices, translated by Thomas Combe, equates the Hydra and Envy (Emblem XCIX). And Abraham Fraunce, in The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch, makes the comparison explicit: "Hydra lurked in moores & fennes; Enuy creepeth on the ground, in base and abiect breasts" (p. 46^v).

46 Symbolicarum Quaestionum, De vniuerso genere, quas serio ludebat, Libri Qvingve (Bononiae, apud Societatem Typographiae Bononiensis, 1574). First published in 1555.

47 Emblemata, cum aliquot nummis antiqui operis, Ioannis Sambuci Tirnaviensis Pannonii (Antwerpiae: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1564), p. 138.

48 Austriacae Gentis Imagines (Venetiis et Oeniponti: Formis Gaspari ab Avibus, 1573), n. pag. First published in 1558.

49 The Civile Wares betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke, 3.1.1-2.

50 Samuel Daniel, The Civile Wares betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke, 4.49.5-8.

51 In this case the text used is that edited by Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare IV (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 191.

52 For a discussion on the relationship of the plays, see A.R. Humphreys, ed., The Second Part of King Henry IV (1966;

rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), pp. xxi-xxviii.

⁵³ Humphreys, ed., The Second Part of King Henry IV, p. xxviii.

⁵⁴ Black, "Counterfeits of Soldiership in Henry IV," p. 382.

Henry V

Despite different emphases in regard to dramatic worth and intention, most critics agree that Henry V stands, to use Norman Rabkin's words, as the "capstone to an edifice of plays tightly mortared to one another."¹ Our examination of myth material in the History plays points us in a similar direction. Thematically, the ideals of the myth-paradise and the myth-hero ought to find a natural conjunction in the reign of Henry V. Imagistically, the harmony is likely to draw on the kind of terminology, and, particularly, on the anglicised Biblical and Classical vocabulary of preceding plays, we have come to associate familiarly with the English mythology. We should, though, be forewarned. While critics like John Dover Wilson,² M.M. Reese,³ and F.P. Wilson⁴ have seen in King Henry the qualities of a perfect monarch, a second tradition of critical interpretation has been much less effusive in its praise. Mark Van Doren,⁵ John Palmer,⁶ and Harold C. Goddard⁷ are among those who dispute the claim that Shakespeare's intentions in this play are wholly and unambiguously heroic. The view is typified by Uva Ellis-Fermor who argues, in The Frontiers of Drama, that "Shakespeare himself, now that he has built the figure [the king] with such care, out of the cumulative experience of eight plays, begins to recoil from it. It has been an experiment, an exploration . . . and . . . he rejects its findings as invalid before the deeper demands of the less explicit but immutable laws of man's spirit."⁸ If, as the theory suggests, the dramatist had become disenchanted with his own creation by the time he came to write Henry V, then we might expect the use and effect of mythological figures to fall short of the long anticipated English ideal.

It was the conclusion of the last chapter that the English myth-hero ought to be characterised by wisely disciplined qualities of moral and martial excellence. These properties we saw articulated in terms of Hercules and Mars respectively.

Henry V concerns itself with the same issues, and we shall begin our discussion with an examination of the king's "moral" credentials.

Matthew Sutcliffe, in The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes (1593), places moral righteousness as the top priority in preparations for war: "First wee are to consider, that our cause be good, and iust. For warres without cause are nothing, but robbery and violence contrary to humanitie, and reason."⁹ This dictum is of importance to the Archbishop of Canterbury's much discussed lecture on the legality of Henry's claim to France (I.i.33-95). Harold Goddard's¹⁰ analysis of the speech has revealed that it weakens Henry's right to the English throne, and, more recently, C.H. Hobday has concurred with this view suggesting, again, that the Archbishop's argument proves "not that Henry is the rightful King of France, but that he is not the rightful King of England."¹¹ And though John H. Walter, in the Arden edition, believes that Canterbury's disputation "follows Holinshed very closely,"¹² Norman Rabkin is of the opinion that the "very qualities that make its equivalent in Shakespeare's sources an unexceptionable instrument of statecraft make it sound on the stage like doubletalk."¹³

Whether for reasons personal or political, Henry's concern with the morality of an expedition against the French is not in question. His inquiry at I.ii.8-32 is, if anything, overstated. And the crucial exchange that takes place after Canterbury completes his genealogical exposition is often neglected by commentators. The king asks again "May I with right and conscience make this claim?" (I.ii.96)--and this after the Archbishop has just spent sixty-three lines endeavouring to answer the same. It seems that Henry, like his twentieth century deprecators, is not persuaded by the prelate's reasoning. Canterbury and Ely, recognizing their king's apprehensions, all but abandon the Salic argument and appeal, instead, to a second source of moral justification. It is this second source that young Henry immediately accepts as irreproachable proof of his moral right to invade France. The words of the clergy must be quoted at some length:

KING. May I with right and conscience make this claim?

CANT. The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!

For in the book of Numbers is it writ,

When the man dies, let the inheritance

Descend unto the daughter. Gracious lord,

Stand for your own, unwind your bloody flag,

Look back into your mighty ancestors.

Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,

From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,

And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince,

Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,

Making defeat on the full power of France,

Whiles his most mighty father on a hill

Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp

Forage in blood of French nobility.

O noble English, that could entertain

With half their forces the full pride of France,

And let another half stand laughing by,

All out of work and cold for action!

ELY. Awake remembrance of these valiant dead,

And with your puissant arm renew their feats.

You are their heir; you sit upon their throne;

The blood and courage that renowned them

Runs in your veins; and my thrice-puissant liege

Is in the very May-morn of his youth,

Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises.

EXET. Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth

Do all expect that you should rouse yourself,

As did the former lions of your blood.

(I.ii.96-124. Emphasis added.)

As early as I.i.31 of 1 Henry VI we had encountered Edward III (Hal's "great-grandsire" at line 103, above) as the origin and Lancastrian model of regenerating English military excellences in campaigns against the French. His Elizabethan stature is discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. The Black Prince (line 105), eldest son of Edward III, is so named not because of his legendary black armour, for which there is no

historical evidence, but because, as Froissart records, he is "styled black by terror of his arms."¹⁴ Tudor writers and artists warm to his memory with something approaching piety. A late fifteenth century painting entitled "Adoration of the Magi," in a private collection, portrays Edward the Black Prince as one of the three Magi.¹⁵ The Mirror for Magistrates, describing the sons of Edward III, insists that

A more royall race was not vnder heauen,
More stowte or more stately of stomacke and person,
Princes all pereles in eche condicion:
Namely syr Edwarde called the blacke prince,
Whan had Englande the lyke before eyther since?¹⁶

Sir Walter Raleigh¹⁷ celebrates the heroic qualities of the Black Prince, and Henry Peacham describes a dream in which he sees a glorious landscape:

Great Edward third, you might see there,
With that victorious Prince his sonne¹⁸

The poem, as a whole, celebrates the great achievements of Minerva, attained through the efforts of her human agents.

The concept of life from death, powerfully evoked in earlier works and, particularly, in Richard II, is, in the words of Canterbury, Ely and the Duke of Exeter, articulated with even greater clarity in this the last play of the Second Tetralogy. Canterbury takes us back to Henry's "great-grand sire's tomb" (line 103); Ely speaks of "these valiant dead" (line 115); and Exeter remembers Edward III and the Black Prince as "former lions" (line 124) of Henry's race. The idyllic England is unable to recapture the physical immortality of a Biblical prelapsarian world, and may not elude the snare of individual transience. Instead, as we saw in Richard II, it seeks its new paradise, its "immortality" perhaps, in the magnificent revival of heroic military deeds from generation to generation. One of the most fundamental ingredients of the human condition--the ability of an individual to help propagate his species--is, in the English second paradise, the vehicle of reviving greatness. The word "spirit" (line 104)

becomes, once more, an anglicised Biblical metaphor for a fine quality of military conduct and competence that can and ought to be passed on from one generation to the next. The "warlike spirit" (line 104) of Edward III and the Black Prince stands outside the domain of physical mortality, never irretrievably lost in the death of the individual but, paradoxically, relying for perpetuation on the human ability to procreate. King Henry is not simply the physical progeny of his great ancestors, but their "spiritual" inheritor as well. The Archbishop insists that he must stand for his own (line 101) and "Look back into your mighty ancestors" (line 102), for, in aspiring to their "warlike spirit," he may awake remembrance of them (Ely at line 115) and, with his puissant arm, "renew their feats" (line 116). The "renewal" of heroic actions, of the warlike spirit, parallels the physical "renewal" of the progenitor in the lives of his offspring. The relation of Edward III to his great son the Black Prince is the best possible exemplification of this--and Henry V is of their lineage. "You are their heir; you sit upon their throne," Bishop of Ely tells the king at line 117, and adds: "The blood and courage that renowned them / Runs in your veins" (lines 118-9). It is this peculiar mix of "blood and courage" as Ely puts it, of the physical and the abstract, that defines the nature of heroic English inheritance. Henry does not stand in isolation. His debt to the past and, particularly, to the English ideal, is profound and unavoidable. Those, his ancestors, who have afforded him earthly life, he must reciprocate with heroic spiritual renewal. In fact, the Duke of Exeter, adding his testimony to the strength of the argument, observes that Henry's brother kings and monarchs "expect that you should rouse yourself, / As did the former lions of your blood" (lines 123-4). This statement of open "expectation," following hard upon the string of imperatives that Canterbury and Ely have levelled at the king, proposes that the emulation of past heroic deeds is a kind of moral obligation. The genuine resurrection of an ancient military spirit becomes an expression of moral propriety.

This last idea is not original to Shakespeare's work. Of

all the popularist works published on the subject of expeditions abroad during the reign of Elizabeth I, George Peckham's A True Reporte Of the late discoveries, and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the Newfound Landes (1583) must rank as one of the strongest statements of the need for an aggressive foreign policy.¹⁹ Purporting to describe the exploits of Sir Humfrey Gilbert, Knight, it evolves, instead, into an open exhortation to conquest. In his preface, Peckham invites comment from well-known contemporaries. The need for foreign acquisitions is explained variously, and some of the reasoning is questionable. But beneath the lure of gold and the desire to spread the Christian faith (presumably the True Church version!), there is a sense of real frustration that Englishmen are not living up to the heroic ethic bequeathed to them by dint of historical precedent and breeding. Sir William Pelham's commendatory poem, for example, may view the New World as a casket of riches waiting to be pilfered, but there is an indignation that goes beyond mere avarice in his line "While pent at home, like sluggardes we remaine."²⁰ So, too, Sir Francis Drake sees the book as a "way to purchase golde" but, almost in the same breath, strongly recommends it to those who "thirsteth after Fame" and "an euerlasting name."²¹ A year earlier, Richard Hakluyt had written, in a dedicatory epistle to Sir Philip Sidney, of the voyages to and discovery of America:

And surely if there were in us that desire to aduance the honour of our Countrie which ought to bee in euery good man, wee woulde not all this while haue foreslowne the possessing of those landes, whiche of equitie and right appertaine vnto vs, as by the discourses that followe shall appeare most plainely.²²

The advancement of the English conquering spirit in foreign places is here understood as the duty of every "good man." Conquering achievement becomes a measure of an individual's moral worth, and Hakluyt's argument for "equitie and right" hinges on the crucial equation of foreign acquisition and virtue.

Fourteen years later, Lawrence Keymis is still complaining in his address "To the Fauourers of the Voyage for Guiana" that Englishmen "in twelue monethes space haue done, or sought to doe nothing woorthie the ancient fame, and reputation of our English nation."²³

The persistent concern with "ancient fame and reputation" in the works of many Tudor writers reflects a desire to express an ideal of military conduct. The morality of such ambitions is vindicated by nationalistic precedent. If England's ancient reputation is to be revered, then a present that fails to aspire to, and achieve, similar heights mirrors not simply a military but a moral decline. The morality of King Henry V's enterprise against the French (as formulated in I.ii) may not, then, hang in the doubt that Harold Goddard and C.H. Hobday believe it does. In the emulation of ancient greatness, and in the great inheritance of an ancestral "warlike spirit," Henry's right to assail the French would have been recognised by Elizabethan groundling and literator alike. Matthew Sutcliffe's demand that "our cause be good, and iust" is satisfied by the act of English conquest abroad itself:

Awake remembrance of these valiant dead,
And with your puissant arm renew their feats.

Ely's admonishment, and the exhortations of Canterbury and Exeter, immediately persuade Henry to the correctness of a French enterprise. After their disputation on the subject of heroic renewal, he has not only accepted that the cause is just but directs his thoughts at once to the practical business of invasion: "We must not only arm t' invade the French, / But lay down our proportions to defend / Against the Scot" (I.ii. 136-8).

There is, though, a second aspect to the question of morality in Henry V. If Hal is to be regarded as a disciplined and righteous English monarch embarking upon a glorious foreign campaign, then we must have confirmation that his personal "transformation" at the end of 2 Henry IV was permanent and absolute. This the Archbishop of Canterbury verifies in the opening scene of the play:

CANT. The King is full of grace and fair regard.

ELY. And a true lover of the holy Church.

CANT. The courses of his youth promis'd it not.
The breath no sooner left his father's body
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem'd to die too; yea, at that very moment,
Consideration like an angel came
And whipp'd th' offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise
T' envelop and contain celestial spirits.
Never was such a sudden scholar made;
Never came reformation in a flood,
With such a heady currence, scouring faults;
Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness
So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
As in this king.

(I.i.22-37. Emphasis added.)

One critic has explored the significance of the Archbishop's term "consideration" (line 28) and he suggests, tentatively, that it was "associated with intense spiritual contemplation, and self-examination, and not merely with thought or reflection."²⁴ In support of this contention, and as evidence of similar usage, we may turn to Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala's Nueva carónica y buen gobierno (probably completed in 1613 after twenty or thirty years labour) which has an illustration representing the City of God.²⁵ The print, which bears an engraver's date of 1599, reveals an artist's impression of Paradise and, as a guide to achieving this mystical state, the Spanish "Conzederacion" is written in large, bold type. It seems clear that we are meant to understand Hal as a new man in a new and perfect Christian life. In keeping with this, Canterbury underpins his description with Baptismal touches—"came reformation in a flood" (line 33); "a heady currence, scouring faults" (line 34). To these inferences of new moral worth must be added the Herculean identification of lines 35-36. Represented as the slayer of his own "Hydra-headed wilfulness," Hal is equated with the most celebrated moral paradigm of sixteenth century secular

emblem books--and a paradigm who is often associated with worthy religious figures. Raphael Holinshed,²⁶ for instance, styles Hercules as a defender of goodness and righteousness in his Chronicles. The Christian emphasis that Canterbury attaches to King Henry's personal victory relates directly to the idea of Hal's "new" body as a "paradise / T' envelop and contain celestial spirits" (lines 30-1). This is obviously a paradise with Christian links, and John H. Walter²⁷ has explained the reference to Heaven and Paradise as the home of celestial spirits in terms of Renaissance theology. Even so, Shakespeare's conception of Hal's paradisaical body is firmly founded in a vision of earthly endeavour and earthly achievement. Paradise and the flesh (Hal's body) are viewed as complementary entities, and not as the contradictory figures of orthodox Biblical dogma. This is in direct contrast with, for example, R.N.E.'s elaborate praise of his benefactor, the Bishop of Worcester, in an English translation of Giovanni Lambi's A Revelation of the Secret Spirit, in which he asserts that many attributes "doth declare your Lordship to beare so noble a mind, that it dwelleth rather in an heavenly Palace, than an earthly body."²⁸ The polarity of the "heavenly Palace" and the "earthly body" is here essential to the compliment. While Shakespeare's "paradise" at I.i.30 in Henry V represents a deviation from the use of "paradise" in Richard II, the harmony of ethereal terminology and earthly subject is much in keeping with the method of the English myth and offers a solid preparation for the emergence of Hal as a myth-hero.

Both of the passages we have looked at so far--that is, those dealing with heroic renewal and the personal transformation of young Henry--are without obvious precedent in the known sources of Henry V. In the opening scenes of the play, at least, the dramatist appears to have made a conscious effort to underline both the merit of foreign invasion and the moral fitness of the newly-crowned king for such a task. Having looked at the ethical implications of the opening scenes, let us now turn our attention to an examination of the second quality that 1 Henry IV forwarded as a desirable characteristic of the myth-hero--disciplined

martial prowess.

The true "Pallas souldier," Gerard Leigh tells us in The Accedence of Armorie (1583), is "an armed Mars, A champion pollitique in fielde to fight, or at home to defende, An ordered Iusticer without respect."²⁹ Given the evidence of Falstaff's rejection and the firm instatement of the Chief Justice at the end of 2 Henry IV, and of Canterbury's affirmation, in Henry V, that when King Henry is petitioned on "any cause of policy, / The Gordian knot of it he will unloose" (I.i.45-6), we may safely accept that Hal promises to fulfil the rôle of "ordered Iusticer." Similarly, the new king's position as "an armed Mars, A champion pollitique" is one apparently confirmed in the opening scenes of Henry V. Hal's plans for foreign exploits are wisely tutored by his desire to make strong provision for home defence:

We must not only arm t' invade the French,
But lay down our proportions to defend
Against the Scot, who will make road upon us
With all advantages.

(I.ii.136-9)

And Exeter, acknowledging the wisdom of the king's point, adds some lines later:

While that the armed hand doth fight abroad,
Th' advised head defends itself at home

(I.ii.178-9)

These sentiments fit precisely the peculiarly English relation of Minerva (Pallas) and Mars that we examined in some detail in the last chapter. If, then, Henry is styled as the wise home defender in these opening scenes, then abroad he is to be seen as the heroic English Mars battling victoriously for the patriotic cause. This, at least, would fit Gerard Leigh's ideal requirements, and complete Henry Peacham's perfect military formula: "Mars defendes the kingdome with his might, / And braues abroad his foe, in glorious armes."³⁰

When, in Richard II, York censures Bolingbroke for provoking civil war on English soil, he propounds, as an alternative and

as an active ideal, the "Martian" exploits of the Black Prince and the generation of Edward III's reign:

Why, foolish boy, the King is left behind,
And in my loyal bosom lies his power.
Were I but now lord of such hot youth
As when brave Gaunt, thy father, and myself
Rescued the Black Prince, that young Mars of men,
From forth the ranks of many thousand French,
O, then how quickly should this arm of mine,
Now prisoner to the palsy, chastise thee
And minister correction to thy fault!

(II.iii.97-105. Emphasis added.)

The emphasis on what has already been called a "warlike spirit," embodied in an English heroic archetype like York, yet apparently lost in the journey of time, at once commemorates a glorious past and laments an ignominious present. It is an idea of peculiar pertinence to a play that antithesises old and new world values so strongly. More to our needs, perhaps, is York's almost off-handed equation of the Black Prince and Mars, the metaphoric usage enhancing the mythic nuances of the account and befitting the choric rôles that first Gaunt and then York assume in the play. But it is a mythology sharply undermined by the deficiencies of the present, microcosmically illustrated in York's personal admission that he is now "prisoner to the palsy" (line 104). The growing awareness that the "England, that was wont to conquer others, / Hath made a shameful conquest of itself" (Richard II II.i.65-6), is accompanied by an implied, if not always spoken, desire for emulation of the mythic past of Edward III and the Black Prince. Shakespeare keeps us in touch with this aspiration by an insistent use of the "Mars" label as a designation of military superlative against foreign enemies. The anglicised Mars, as we saw in the previous chapter, lacks the malice and lawlessness of his Classical namesake. He is a pure English hero and his name becomes an expression of undivided praise. When Bolingbroke reaches for a supreme statement of Hotspur's military worth, he himself seeks it in the name of the English deity:

Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes,
This infant warrior, in his enterprises
Discomfited great Douglas

(1 Henry IV III.ii.112-4)

And in Henry V, with Hal about to begin his famous campaigns
against the French, the Chorus longs for a Muse of fire to
surpass even the greatest heights of invention:

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire,
Crouch for employment.

(Prologue 1-8. Emphasis added.)

Referring, in particular, to lines 5-8, Paul A. Jorgensen, in
Shakespeare's Military World, writes that the "same figure is
used by Holinshed, except that Bellona appears there instead of
Mars."³¹ And, not only does Shakespeare consciously choose to
work with "Mars," but he also effects an unusual manipulation
of the name's significance. The Classical war-god is the
traditional enemy of the muse--Samuel Daniel calls him the "Muse-
foe Mars"³² in Delia--and yet here the Chorus wishes he had a
Muse of fire so that he could properly describe Henry as a "Mars"
(line 6). Further, it is the "warlike Harry" (line 5) that the
Chorus talks of, anticipating Canterbury's use of "warlike spirit"
(I.ii.104) in his discourse on the need for the renewal of the
deeds of Edward III and the Black Prince. There is, though,
a glimmer of uneasiness in the passage. The dog or wolf has
a strong association with the Classical Mars Ultor (the Avenger).
Stephen Batman notes that "The Wolfe with the Sheepe in his
mouth representeth Mars, whose Souldiers are as great raueners
of other mens goodes, as the wolfe is of the seely sheepe."³³
In Julius Caesar, Antony imagines that Caesar's avenging spirit
will return and "Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war"

(III.i.274). Following Steele, T.S. Dorsch argues that the passage in the Prologue of Henry V "serves very well as a gloss"³⁴ of Antony's line. Certainly, the suggestion of the Classical Avenger Mars and the context of civil carnage turn the Roman's "dogs of war" into displeasing beasts. And Shakespeare's juxtaposition, in Henry V, of the anglicised Martian image of commendation with a Classical description of the hounds of famine, sword, and fire is an early indication that the glory of foreign conquest might not be as unqualified as earlier plays had suggested. It is tempting to shrug off the rather unfortunate nuance of line 7 by pointing to the sense of masterly control offered in the word "Leash'd" or by arguing that slaughtering Frenchmen is an indispensable part of English myth-making. But the word "Leash'd," usually used in the negative ("unleashed"), feels awkward and imposed, as though it strains towards its more familiar opposite. And qualities like famine and fire do not readily lend themselves to control.

Having examined the king's moral and military credentials as a potential foreign conqueror, we are in a position to make two important observations. Firstly, in moral terms the proposed invasion of France is justified both by an ancient precedent and by an insistence on Hal's worthiness for such an enterprise. The era of the foreign conquering Black Prince and Edward III is an era that ought to be emulated, and Hal has, to use Robert Crowley's words of 1559, become "a new man and tournd all that rage of wildnesse into sober & wyse behauiour, and vice into vertue."³⁵ Secondly, Hal seems to possess the important qualities of the Pallas-type soldier. Here is no rash Hotspur rushing blindly into battle. King Henry V's military wisdom guides him to make preparation for home defence before embarking on a sortie abroad. All appears to bode well for the resurrection of a warlike spirit and discipline on French soil, and the stage is set for a full and living expression of the ideals of the English mythology. There is, at this stage, a single qualification. Lines 6-8 (quoted above) of the Prologue are a little disturbing. And, as the play progresses, the accumulation of such mythic and

iconographical inferences leads us to believe that the full desirability of the foreign conqueror archetype, posited since the beginning of 1 Henry VI as a model of English virtue, moves into a shadow of doubt as the playwright reaches the climax of his dramatic design.

The Chorus repeatedly asks us to use our imaginations to transpose the stage scene before us into much larger dimensions. What is suggested on this most obvious of levels is echoed and reworked on many other planes. Henry waxes alchemical when he thunders that the Dauphin's tennis ball jest "Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones" (I.ii.282). Grey remarks with some amazement that Hal's "father's enemies / Have steep'd their galls in honey, and do serve you / With hearts create of duty and of zeal" (II.ii.29-31). Henry remarks that his treacherous Treasurer, Lord Scroop, "mightst have coin'd me into gold" (II.ii.98). At the beginning of III.iii Harfleur is threatened with total reduction to ashes (line 9). Williams chides a disguised Hal with the line "You may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather" (IV.i.198-200). Dramatically, we might guess that these references to transformation point towards Agincourt, a battle that effects the ultimate alteration in prospect and fortune. But it is intriguing that the imagery of transformation in Henry V frequently conveys a sense of contradictory, if not competing, opposites coupled together. Tennis balls are matched with gun-stones--the first savouring of sport and jollity, the second of death and sorrow; the bitter gall of Henry IV's enemies becomes a honeyed gall; the living city of Harfleur is weighed against the deathly vision of its ashes; and Williams' image of futility is one which pits searing heat against extreme cold. The technique of two-fold significance, of imagistic duality, has proven a useful tool to Shakespeare in his efforts to articulate the ideas of myth and anti-myth. In the First Tetralogy, for example, the "womb" was an image of both life and death. King John saw "Death" as, on the one hand, a grim terrorist and, on the other, the epitome of the English soldier. The word "spirit" in Richard II acquired an earthly English

connotation that apparently contradicted Biblical usage. And Henry IV found in "Mars" a furious Classical warrior and a glorious English hero. It is perhaps possible that the theme of transformation in Henry V's imagery mirrors not the reformation of Hal, or the victory at Agincourt, but the evolution from the glorious promise of the play's beginning to what many consider to be the unsavoury proceedings at Agincourt. If so, the celebrative terminology of the opening scenes--terminology that relates explicitly to the English mythology--may, in later stages of the work, acquire the reverse significance of the anti-mythology. This, at least, is the imagistic mechanism we have already encountered in earlier plays, and particularly in the Yorkist Tetralogy and Richard II, and it remains to be seen if the same is true of Henry V.

In conquering his own "Hydra-headed wilfulness," Hal is presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury as having triumphed within himself, and the victory, emblematically predicted in the previous play by the stage rejection of Falstaff, is given the singularity of a thrice repeated "never" (I.i.32, 33, and 35). But while the Herculean victory is to be seen as part of the "paradisial" achievement of the prince-cum-king, the identity holds good for the public world as well. We should not be entirely unprepared, therefore, when King Henry V labels the traitors Grey, Scroop and Cambridge as monsters and defilers of his paradise:

See you, my princes and my noble peers,
These English monsters!

(II.ii.84-5)

What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop, thou cruel,
Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature?

(II.ii.94-5)

I will weep for thee;
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man.

(II.ii.140-2)

In the Henry IV plays, Shakespeare styled the regenerating

process of rebellion and civil dissent as Hydraic. This we recognised as the anti-mythology's grotesque perversion of the heroic reviving mechanism of the English mythology. The fall of the English second Eden--a fall acknowledged in the first play of the Lancastrian quartet--precipitated crops of monstrous rebels intent on civil insurrection, instead of successive generations of chivalric heroes. The need for a monster slayer became increasingly urgent. Hal stood out as a likely candidate for such a rôle. Here, in Henry V, after Herculean inferences have been directed at him in the second scene of the play, the new king positions himself as protector of the realm against the subversions of its enemies within. He is the Herculean monster slayer, and he styles the plotters as "English monsters," emphasising the unnaturalness of their actions by describing Scroop as a "cruel, / Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature." To Henry, the machinations of the evil trio have led to a situation "like / Another fall of man" and their punishment for this transgression is, significantly, death--similarly, the transgression in Biblical Eden brought the actuality of death into the lives of the transgressors and their progeny.

It may, at first, seem strange that Hal should frame the wickedness of Scroop, Cambridge and Grey in terms of primordial disobedience. In fact, his indictment of them (II.ii.79-144) is a rather elaborate and, apparently, excessive condemnation, owing virtually nothing to the play's known sources. Yet, if we look at it in the context of the developing mythological theme of Shakespeare's History cycle--that is, the progression towards a myth-paradise and a myth-hero--we may appreciate the importance of this seemingly peripheral incident of treachery to the vision of the ideal England we had anticipated Shakespeare would create in this the "capstone" play of the series. The Hydra of rebellion is not dead. It lives on with unnerving certainty and, almost forgotten, this new seed raises its head to assure all of the immortality of its ghastly parentage and of the inevitability of its return in the era of Henry VI. Fittingly, the Hydra of Lerna, in some versions of the Classical

fable, possessed an immortal head that Hercules could only subdue and never kill.³⁶ So, too, Hal finds himself still struggling against internal foes when the demands of the English mythology and the second paradise would have him conquering foreigners abroad and reliving the glories of his heroic forefathers. The three conspirators seriously challenge the validity of Henry's new paradise, and it is perhaps for this reason that he berates their treachery at such length. In answer to these regenerating domestic monstrosities, Hal can only ask Katherine, three acts later, "Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?" (V.ii.204-8). This is, indeed, a forlorn hope of heroic succession. The Chorus, in the closing lines of the play, puts Henry VI's "inheritance" in its sad perspective:

Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd king
Of France and England, did this king succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing
That they lost France and made his England bleed;
Which oft our stage hath shown

(Epilogue 9-12)

William Thomas, in The Historie of Italye (1549), observes "howe mutable fortune is, and howe that, whyche hathe bene gotten with extreeme peines, unmeasurable expences, and unreasonable effusion of bloudde, hath ben lost in a moment: and that commonly he that hathe conquered most in warre, at the beste is yet a loser."³⁷ The exploits of Henry V fall prey to this same cruel truth. Hal's hope that his own son will perpetuate and enhance an heroic spirit owes its ideology to the precepts of the English mythology, precepts that have been explored and clarified by Shakespeare over a number of plays. History, itself, crushes the dream of heroic renewal.

We have argued, already, that heroic renewal is a moral obligation. Hal's rôle as a moral Herculean figure, slaying his own Hydra-headed wilfulness and vanquishing those English

monsters who would defile his new paradise, seems sound enough. But what of that other archetypal monster slayer, Saint George? Paul Deschamps,³⁸ in his book La Légende de S. Georges et les combats des croisés dans les Peintures Murales du Moyen Age, attests to the multi-national appeal of the saint. Even before Edward III adopted Saint George as the patron saint of England, and used his name as an English battle cry, the saint was well known as what Alban Butler calls "a Christian Knight."³⁹ In La Légende Dorée--a work translated into English in 1483, possibly by William Caxton--Jacobus de Voragine (born in 1228) recounts the story of how Saint George entered the city of Silene, in Libya, and promised to slay a dragon he held in bondage if the city's inhabitants would accept baptism: "Croyez au Christ, recevez le baptême, et je tuerai votre persecuteur!"⁴⁰ At least one English theologian makes use of the distinctly Christian connotations of the anecdote. This is how John Bale, writing in 1547, describes the quest of the Christian: "As great honoure wyll yt now be to yow (yea, rather moche greater) to slee the sede of the Serpent by the worde of God, as euer yt was to Saynt George that noble captayne, to slee the great hydre or Dragon."⁴¹

All this might seem of little relevance had not Shakespeare given us an early indication of his willingness to deploy the name of the saint in contexts that demand not only military but also moral evaluation. Take, for instance, King Richard III's cry on Bosworth Field:

Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.

(Richard III V.iii.349-51)

It was noted, in the first chapter of the thesis, that Richard's words are rather confusing. On the one hand, he mentions the name of Saint George, but, on the other, his actual appeal is for "the spleen of fiery dragons." Through this subtle twist of language, Shakespeare condenses the gamut of monstrous and evil inferences linked with Richard throughout the play into a single ironic image. By inadvertently turning himself into a monster or dragon figure, the king makes an implicit moral

distinction between his own cause and that of Richmond, who himself invokes with much more clarity (and far greater success) the aid of Saint George: "God and Saint George! Richmond and victory!" (V.iii.270). Similarly, Bolingbroke's cry in the Coventry lists, as he prepares to do battle with Mowbray, links his moral righteousness with the name of the saint: "Mine innocence and Saint George to thrive!" (Richard II I.iii.84). As yet untarnished by the stigmata of rebellion, civil war and usurpation, Bolingbroke stands for truth and justice in a wicked world. It is intriguing that in Henry IV, where moral justness is always a contentious issue, there is not a single appeal to Saint George, despite the obvious opportunities before the clash at Shrewsbury.

Given that the figure of Saint George is loaded with both moral and religious significances, there seems an attractive possibility of an identification with King Henry V. We have spoken already of Hal's moral credentials. Let us turn, then, to a brief examination of his religion. John H. Walter⁴² has outlined the religious parallels and echoes used by Shakespeare in his statement of Hal's conversion, and this chapter has, itself, touched on some of these points. But the Christian issues of the play extend much further afield than this. E.M.W. Tillyard observes that "the chroniclers make much of Henry's piety, and Shakespeare follows them very conscientiously."⁴³ Henry's Christian commitment is everywhere in evidence. Even after the miracle of Agincourt, when he could have been forgiven for a lapse in pietistic concentration, Hal is mindful of his religious obligations:

Do we all holy rites:

Let there be sung 'Non nobis' and 'Te Deum';

The dead with charity enclos'd in clay--

(IV.viii.120-2)

It is odd that Shakespeare should choose to align his myth hero so closely with a Biblical scheme of the world. While the English mythology does not set out to deny the validity of the Christian faith, Shakespeare's conception of an English paradise in earlier plays is one founded on human endeavour and earthly

domain. In fact, some of the terminological antitheses of the Biblical scheme, such as the disharmony of "flesh" and "spirit," are quite out of tune with the philosophy of the English myth. Clearly, there has been a shift in intention from old Gaunt's essentially secular vision of an English Eden in Richard II. Shakespeare's attempt to integrate elements of Christian and English myth in Henry V may be recognised in King Henry's appeal to Saint George before the battle at Agincourt:

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:
Follow your spirit; and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'
(III.i.31-4)

In shouting to his men "Follow your spirit" (line 33), Hal alludes to the English warlike spirit and to the moral obligation of heroic spiritual renewal demanded of him by a glorious ancestral tradition. There is no doubt that the cry of "Saint George!" (line 34), with its Edwardian links, contributes to the moral worth of that tradition. But King Henry's deeply Christian inclinations entitle us to presume the presence of a distinctly Biblical design. Hal is the committed Christian reasserting an unswerving faith in the blessing of an Hebraic God: "Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'" (line 34). And, no doubt again, the appeal to "Saint George!" serves also to complement the Christian connotation. This rather novel adaptation of the two-way figure mechanism effects a skilful harmonisation of secular and religious schemata, affording to both the services of a formidable monster slayer. Yet, we are prevented from identifying Hal with the great Saint George. The greyhounds "Straining upon the start" (line 32) bring us right back to the uneasiness of the hounds of famine, sword and fire that crouch for employment at Henry's heels in the first act. Is Hal the monster slayer or the monster itself?

The idea of the soldier as a "devourer" or a "ravener" has already been suggested in Stephen Batman's description of the Classical Mars. The notion is not uncommon. The Waddesdon Room, in the British Museum, houses a late sixteenth century gun

which has a barrel tip shaped like a monster's head with a gaping mouth where the bullet leaves the casing. Shakespeare, too, makes use of the idea in Henry V, as he had done in previous plays. As early as I.ii, Canterbury remembers that Edward III stood smiling to see his son, "his lion's whelp / Forage in blood of French nobility" (lines 109-10). At II.iv, Exeter implores the French king to

Deliver up the crown; and to take mercy
On the poor souls for whom this hungry war
Opens his vasty jaws; and on your head
Turning the widows' tears, the orphans' cries,
The dead men's blood, the privy maidens' groans,
For husbands, fathers, and betrothed lovers,
That shall be swallowed in this controversy.
(lines 103-9 Emphasis added.)

The "transformational" mood of Shakespeare's imagery in this play may explain what is an important difference between the reasoning of Canterbury and Exeter. As a valid expression of the English mythology, Canterbury's image of the devouring Black Prince, foraging, as a lion's cub, in the blood of French nobility, strikes a note of patriotic approval. After all, as Barnaby Rich writes in his Farewell to Militarie profession (1581), "the Frenche hath euer been our enemies by Nature."⁴⁴ Exeter, too, in that second scene of the play, had urged Hal to "rouse yourself, / As did the former lions of your blood" (I.ii.123-4, emphasis added). But now, in the second act, with the prospect of war real and near, the predatory metaphor is suddenly depersonalised. Exeter talks of a "hungry war" (line 104) opening its vast jaws, and of a host of victims who "shall be swallowed in this controversy" (line 109)—but not of a leonine Harry. We have explored, already, the argument that sees foreign conquest as an English monarch's duty and right. It is surely revealing that Exeter should here go to such lengths to lay the blame for war at the French king's doorstep. The Englishman begs him to "take mercy" (line 103) on the "poor souls" (line 104) whose deaths will be "on your head" (line 105).

The morality of war on foreign soil has been questioned.

Commensurate with this moral transformation, the precepts and terminology of the English mythology begin to lapse into significances more akin to the anti-mythology. Suddenly, the Dauphin "longs to eat the English" (III.vii.89). And the Chorus, in a turn of phrase reminiscent of Hotspur's Martian cry in 1 Henry IV (IV.i.113-7), talks of the disadvantaged Englishmen as being "Like sacrifices" (Act IV. Prol. 23). We are no longer moving in the domain of the English Mars, that valiant warrior whose full force is ideally placed in the service of England against the foreign foeman. We have no longer a Black Prince, a young English "Mars of men" (Richard II II.iii.101), foraging in the blood of the French. As the moral issues move into areas of uncertainty, so Mars' unequivocal patronage of the English cause abroad melts away. The Dauphin, in particular, and war, in general, now threaten to "devour" the English invaders. No longer sanctioned by an anglicised deity, they are "Like sacrifices," like offerings to an indiscriminate Classical Mars whose sway upon the battlefield is as unpartisan as it is bestial. The favours of such a fickle deity can never be guaranteed but, in the pagan world, it was customary and even obligatory to invoke his assistance. Guillaume du Choul, in his Discours de la Religion des Anciens Romains Illustré (1556), conveys well the sense of fortune, sacrifice and supplication traditionally associated with the Classical Roman war god: "Et pource que la bonne fortune accompaigne souuentefois les batailles, & les expeditions de la guerre, ie l'ay voulu mettre & colloquer au plus pres du Dieu Mars: auquel les Romains firent faire temples, luy donnant sacerdotess nommez Salies."⁴⁵ It is perhaps of significance, then, that both warring parties in Henry V openly appeal to the same deity. At III.v.15-18, the French Constable addresses the "Dieu de batailles":

Dieu de batailles! where have they this mettle?
Is not their climate foggy, raw, and dull;
On whom, as in despite, the sun looks pale,
Killing their fruit with frowns?

The unpredictable machinations of the Graeco-Roman god are at

work again! And Henry, himself, in a moment of uncharacteristic paganism, begs:

O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts,
Possess them not with fear! Take from them now
The sense of reck'ning, if th' opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them!

(IV.i.285-8)

While the use of Mars in Henry V is in no way indebted to Shakespeare's sources, it is worth looking at a passage in Hall's chronicle that seems to offer a parallel to Henry's lines: "Therefore puttynge your onely truste in hym, let not their multytude feare youre heartes, nor their great noubre abate your courages."⁴⁶ Hall does not refer to Mars, but to the Lord God. If Shakespeare had Hall's passage in mind, he obviously made a conscious effort to paganise it. It may also be a small indicator of Classical intention that, whereas the Chorus uses the name "Mars" in the opening Prologue as a suggestive expression of the anglicised deity, both the French Constable and King Henry refer to the god by his functional title (God of battles or war) as does Lady Percy when she harangues the hateful and fickle god of war in 2 Henry IV (II.iii.35). True, Grandpré does use the name "Mars" when he observes, of the English,

Big Mars seems bankrupt in their beggar'd host,
And faintly through a rusty beaver peeps.

(IV.ii.43-4. Emphasis added.)

But even here we may decipher some measure of uneasiness in the caution of "seems" which betrays the secret fear, magnified and justified by our own foreknowledge, that the skittish Roman deity will snatch victory from those who most expect it. As the culmination of what is, allegedly, an exercise in heroic renewal, the victory at Agincourt ought to crown and vindicate the English patronage of Mars. This is not the case. After Agincourt, allusion to the god is conspicuous by its absence. It seems that the presence of a Classical Mars in the previous acts has, to no small degree, undermined the credibility of an English Mars. Victory is ascribed to God (IV.viii.111-14)

where, in mythological terms, it should be more properly assigned to the vagaries of the Classical war-lord.

The play's iconographical imagery helps us derive a link between the English soldier and Death itself. As a personification, Death slips almost unobtrusively into the play through the lips of Pistol:

O braggart vile and damned furious wight!
The grave doth gape and doting death is near;
Therefore exhale.

[Pistol draws.

(II.i.58-60)

In some ways the part here given to the ancient Pistol is quite fittingly ironic. On the surface, his foolish and fantastic disposition savours somewhat of the antic mannerisms of the Dance of Death. But the similarity ends there, for though Pistol, the marauding would-be "Death" figure, can have his murderous intentions assuaged by the French coinage of Monsieur Le Fer, the victims of, say, Holbein's Death are much less fortunate. And, as if to demonstrate the great dissimilarity, we are soon presented with a stark and grim contrast to the idle threatener. Here is Henry before Harfleur:

Defy us to our worst; for, as I am a soldier,
A name that in my thoughts becomes me best,
If I begin the batt'ry once again,
I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur
Till in her ashes she lie buried.
The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,
And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of bloody hand shall range
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass.
Your fresh fair virgins and your flow'ring infants.

(III.iii.5-14. Emphasis added.)

The unrecanting mower figure is no stranger to Renaissance iconography. A book entitled Eruditorium penitentieale, which was published in Paris towards the end of the fifteenth century, shows a gathering of Death figures in macabre gardening poses.⁴⁷

One holds a spade, another grasps a scythe. Jacob Wimpfeling,⁴⁸ in Adolescentia (1500), chooses to portray Death as a skeletal figure, swinging a scythe in a grassy graveyard. And we need not look far for proof of Death's heartlessness on the field of battle. Hans Holbein's cut "The Knight" depicts Death as a savage soldier who is evidently taking some pleasure in killing the knight with his lance.⁴⁹ So, too, Georgette de Montenay's skeletal emissary, in Emblematvm Christianorvm Centvria, looks less than congenial as he symbolically executes a soldier.⁵⁰ Vincentio Saviolo's book His Practise. In two Bookes (1595), on the subject of single combat and honourable quarrels, reveals a print of a ragged man looking at a proud knight on horseback and pointing to a grim skeleton lying on the ground near-by: "O Wormes Meate: O Froath: O Vanitie: Why Art Thou So Insolent."⁵¹

The notion of the ideal English soldier as Death itself on foreign soil has been made familiar since 1 Henry VI, with a particularly notable exploration of this theme in King John. We have observed, as well, that the Death figure, like other myth images in the History plays, is a double-faced Janus, looking in one direction, as it were, to the beneficence of the English mythology and, in the other, to the maleficence of the English anti-mythology. So, in Richard II, the Dance of Death figure becomes the grim antic of the English paradise lost, of the anti-mythology. Harry, as a Death figure before Harfleur, leans ominously towards the latter significance. The threat of penetration of the city, and the promise that he will not leave "Till in her ashes she lie buried" (line 9), not only remind us of Old Troy's reduction to ashes—an emotive subject to a proud British nation that claimed it derived its origins and culture from the great city and its inhabitants—but also return us to the familiar imagistic theme of "enclosure" in which the threat of penetration, as we witnessed in King John and in Richard II, was directly related to the threat of England's anti-mythology. In Shakespeare's vision, an England "penetrated" is a paradise lost. Given these undesirable inferences, King Henry's bland assumption of a grim "Death" figure identity, promising swift penetration of the walls that enclose peaceful Harfleur, serves

to darken further our initial impression of his conquering ambitions in France.

C.H. Hobday has examined some aspects of the image cluster associated with death and concludes that, "whatever Shakespeare may say about Henry, in his heart he regarded him as a murderer. Faced with the demand to depict such a man as a hero, he took refuge in the irony which permeates the whole play, and constantly juxtaposed the fine talk of honour and religion with the realities of human greed and cruelty."⁵² As a conclusion, this seems a little too narrow, if not harsh. Shakespeare is more interested in the consequences of an English mythology pursued to the limits of its practical possibilities, than in a personal assault on the character of Hal. It is the concept of the English warrior abroad as a Death figure, rather than the idea of the specific individual as a murderer, that the dramatist appears to emphasize in the play. As evidence of this, we may look to several instances where Shakespeare makes a broad link between English soldiers and danse macabre figures. Grandpré talks of the English as "carriours," a term glossed as "skeletons, living carcasses"⁵³ by John H. Walter in the Arden edition of the play:

Why do you stay so long, my lords of France?

You island carriours, desperate of their bones,

Ill-favouredly become the morning field

(IV.ii.38-40. Emphasis added.)

And Henry himself brags of dead English soldiers who kill "in relapse of mortality":

Mark then abounding valour in our English,

That, being dead, like to the bullet's grazing

Break out into a second course of mischief,

Killing in relapse of mortality.

(IV.iii.104-7)

Though agreement on the interpretation of the last line eludes critics, it is not stretching the point to suggest that phrases like "bullet's grazing," "Break out," and "second course of mischief" convey a sense of Death-like animation. The intentions

of Grandpré and Henry may be quite different but, by inviting comparison with the Dance of Death, both bring into focus, once more, the play's general uneasiness about the actuality of the Englishman as foreign conqueror. The most open expression of such uneasiness is Michael Williams' protestation in the first scene of Act Four, but this can hardly match the unnerving undertones of Exeter's account of York embracing and expiring upon the body of Suffolk, six scenes later:

So did he turn, and over Suffolk's neck
He threw his wounded arm and kiss'd his lips;
And so, espous'd to death, with blood he seal'd
A testament of noble-ending love.

(IV.vi.24-7. Emphasis added.)

This description caps the identification of the English soldier and Death, and occurring ten lines before Henry's order for every soldier to "kill his prisoners" (line 37)--an action defended by John H. Walter⁵⁴ but condemned by Harold Goddard⁵⁵ and C.H. Hobday⁵⁶--re-emphasises that equation. The Duke of Exeter's phrase "espous'd to death" is reminiscent of Theodor de Bry's emblem of a faithful lover bringing a rose to an obviously bashful skeletal bride.⁵⁷ The bizarre ironies of Death as a blushing bride and the offer of a flower, the very symbol of life itself, are pertinent to some areas of the dramatist's imagistic manipulation in Henry V. Andrew Willet, in Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una, refers to personified Death as a "good Ladie."⁵⁸ But Shakespeare's deathly union is decidedly an all male affair. The iconography of "life in death," which has stood, in Shakespeare's earlier plays, for the English mythology's glorious processes of both physical and spiritual renewal, is here perverted in a grim premonition of Henry VI's coming reign which will prove as barren in heroic rebirth as in hope. The strange marriage rite of noble York and valiant Suffolk, an inverted rite denied the promise of physical offspring, marks the end rather than the beginning of spiritual glories. Exeter's "seal'd" has a suitable finality about it.

It is left to the Duke of Burgundy to focus the play's

gamut of unwholesome anti-mythological innuendoes:

let it not disgrace me

If I demand, before this royal view,
What rub or what impediment there is
Why that the naked, poor, and mangled Peace,
Dear nurse of arts, plenties, and joyful births,
Should not in the best garden of the world,
Our fertile France, put up her lovely visage?
Alas, she hath from France too long been chas'd!
And all her husbandry doth lie on heaps,
Corrupting in its own fertility.

(V.ii.31-40)

We have come far from the notion of England as a myth-paradise, enclosed by Neptune, and protected from the harms of the world. Instead, fertile France has become the new Eden, the "best garden of the world" (line 36) and the "nurse of arts, plenties, and joyful births" (line 35). John of Gaunt talks of "This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings" (Richard II II.i.51, emphasis added) in his vision of the English paradise, of the second Eden. In Henry V, even the Chorus, that most patriotic of English commentators, does not attribute to England the mantle of the second paradise, but describes France as the "world's best garden" (line 7) in the Epilogue. The idea of France as the world's best garden is not to be found in any of Henry V's known sources and, on the evidence of Holinshed,⁵⁹ Burgundy's direct appeal for peace to King Henry is entirely Shakespeare's own invention. But the concept of France as a happy and blessed garden molested by the English is even more surprising when we measure it against the customary Elizabethan view of a fortunate and much-favoured England threatened, always, by the envy of less happy neighbours. Barnaby Rich writes in 1581: "For who knoweth not what an eye sore, this little Ile of Englande, hath been to the whole worlde, and how long haue we liued (as it were) in contempt of suche Countries as be our nexte neighbours, who still enueighyng our quiet and happie gouernment: haue practized by as many deuises as thei could, to bring vs into their owne predicament."⁶⁰

And Sir Lewis Lewkenor boasts in 1595: "The Spanish enemy himselfe admireth the blessed estate and happie government of England."⁶¹ Now, in Henry V, the English have become the defilers of the French paradisaical garden and the harbingers of Death and "corruption." Hans Holbein's vision of a skeletal Death shadowing Adam in the postlapsarian world seems relevant.⁶² The English soldiers, like Death in the Biblical scheme, have "penetrated" the French Eden, and that penetration has ravished Peace and "chas'd" (line 38) her from paradise. Where once the land was full of "plenties, and joyful births," it now finds a perverted fertility in the decomposition of its own "husbandry" (lines 39-40). It is significant that Shakespeare should depart from his sources and place such inordinate stress on agricultural imagery in describing the ravages of the English invasion:

Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart,
 Unpruned dies; her hedges even-pleach'd,
 Like prisoners wildly overgrown with hair,
 Put forth disorder'd twigs; her fallow leas
 The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory,
 Doth root upon, while that the coulter rusts
 That should deracinate such savagery;
 The even mead, that erst brought sweetly forth
 The freckled cowslip, burnet, and green clover,
 Wanting the scythe, all uncorrected, rank,
 Conceive by idleness, and nothing teems
 But hateful docks, rough thistles, kecksies, burs,
 Losing both beauty and utility.

(V.ii.41-53)

The emphasis on neglected husbandry relates generally to the gardening metaphors Shakespeare used in Richard II as an expression of the English second Garden of Eden lost. It is possible that the idea is taken a step further in Henry V. The word "George" is adapted from the Greek *Γεώργος* which means a husbandman or gardener.⁶³ Henry's cry of "Saint George!" at III.i.34 is now turned to irony as Burgundy accuses the English monarch of

behaviour that is most "unfarmerly."

In Classical terms, we may consider the flight of mangled Peace, that nurse of arts, plenty, and joyful births, as a symptom of a world commanded and controlled, if that is the right word, by the Roman Mars. Stephen Batman, in The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes (1577), reminds us that "where Mars inuadeth, all thinges are lefte desolate, & destroyed."⁶⁴ The Duke of Burgundy's exposition on the subject of the agricultural chaos in France brought about by Henry's penetration of the French kingdom is filled with words like "mangled" (line 34), "Corrupting" (line 40), "disorder'd" (line 44), "savagery" (line 47), "uncorrected" (line 50), "rank" (line 50), "hateful" (line 52)--words that suggest a Classical Mars-type destruction of an ordered and peaceful world. It is no coincidence, then, that Burgundy goes on immediately to slander the essential quality of the Roman war god:

And as our vineyards, fallows, meads, and hedges,
Defective in their natures, grow to wildness;
Even so our houses and ourselves and children
Have lost, or do not learn for want of time,
The sciences that should become our country;
But grow, like savages--as soldiers will,
That nothing do but meditate on blood--
To swearing and stern looks, diffus'd attire,
And everything that seems unnatural.

(V.ii.54-62. Emphasis added.)

Untutored by the wisdom and strategy of Minerva, "Mars shall on his altar sit / Up to the ears in blood" (Hotspur, 1 Henry IV IV.i.116-7). The English harmony of Mars and Minerva has been abandoned in this vandalisation of the French paradise, and the Frenchman's words underscore the Classical tradition of Mars as the arch-enemy of Peace and Abundance. While Minerva is goddess of just and counselled war, she also holds office as the defender of peace. Abraham Fraunce attests to the paradox: "Lady Minerua, / Of peace and of wars chiefe guide."⁶⁵ In a painting by Tintoretto,⁶⁶ Minerva stands between Peace and Abundance on the one hand, and Mars on the other, holding off

the latter and urging him to allay his murderous intent. Evelyn March Phillipps, in Tintoretto (1911), compares this painting to another Tintoretto print titled "The Three Graces," and concludes that "The figure 'Minerva expelling Mars,' while Venice feasts with Peace and Concord, among vines and fruits, has the same happy idyllic note."⁶⁷ It is intriguing that Tintoretto's Venice, with its "vines and fruits," should be threatened by the bloody warrior Mars, just as Burgundy's France of "vineyards, fallows, meads, and hedges" (line 54) is menaced by soldiers that "nothing do but meditate on blood" (line 60). Henry, it seems, has been transformed from an English Mars of heroic calibre, to a destructive Classical deity of uncompromising savagery. In Shakespeare's now ironic vision of the English mythology, the glory of foreign conquest is reinterpreted as a vicious assault on paradise.

Henry V

Notes

- ¹ "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," Shakespeare Quarterly, 28 (1977), p. 280.
- ² The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 60-81, 114-28.
- ³ The Cease of Majesty (Edward Arnold Ltd, 1961), pp. 319-23.
- ⁴ Shakespearean and Other Studies (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 41-2.
- ⁵ Shakespeare (New York: H. Holt, 1939), pp. 170-9.
- ⁶ Political Characters of Shakespeare (Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1945), pp. 221-44.
- ⁷ The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 219-21.
- ⁸ The Frontiers of Drama (Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1945), p. 47.
- ⁹ The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes, described out of the doings of most valiant and expert Captaines, and confirmed both by ancient, and moderne examples, and praecedents (deputies of Christopher Barker, 1593), sigs. C2^v-C3^r.
- ¹⁰ The Meaning of Shakespeare, I, 219-21.
- ¹¹ "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 21 (1968), p. 110.
- ¹² See Walter's edition of King Henry V (1954; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970), note to I.ii.33-95. The relevant section from Holinshed's Chronicles is quoted in Appendix I (p. 160) of the Arden edition.
- ¹³ "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," p. 290.
- ¹⁴ See Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, Centenary Ed., revised by Ivor H. Evans (1970; rpt. Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1977), p. 119: "He [Edward, the Black Prince] is popularly supposed to be named from wearing black armour, but there is no evidence

for this. Froissart says he was 'styled black by terror of his arms' (c. 169). The name does not appear to have been used before the latter part of the 16th century and first appeared in 1569."

¹⁵ The painting, titled "Adoration of the Magi," is indexed in the visual collection catalogue of The Warburg Institute, at the University of London, with the three Magi identified as Edward the Black Prince, Edward III and Richard II.

¹⁶ See the edition of Lily B. Campbell, The Mirror for Magistrates (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1960), p. 92. These words (lines 24-8) are given to Thomas, Duke of Gloucester. The Mirror, which is believed to have first appeared in 1555, may well disprove the date of 1569 suggested in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (above) for the first written appearance of the title "Black Prince."

¹⁷ See "The Historie of the World" in Sir Walter Raleigh: Selections from his Writings, ed. G.E. Hadow (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917), pp. 93-4. In further praise of the Prince of Wales, Raleigh observes that even the French historian, John de Serres, is forced to admit that although the odds were loaded against the English at the Battle of Poitiers, the young English hero, the Black Prince, was still able to win a miraculous and famous victory.

¹⁸ Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroycal Devices (W. Dight, 1612), p. 211.

¹⁹ A Trve Reporte, Of the late discoveries, and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the New-found Landes: By that valiaunt and worthye Gentleman, Sir Humfrey Gilbert Knight (J. Charlewood for John Hinde, 1583).

²⁰ George Peckham, A Trve Reporte, p. 7.

²¹ George Peckham, A Trve Reporte, p. 8.

²² Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the Ilands adiacent vnto the same (Thomas Woodcocke, 1582), on p. 1 of "The Dedicatorie Epistle" to Sir Philip Sidney.

²³ Keymis makes this remark in his address "To the Fauourers of the Voyage for Guiana" in A Relation of the second Voyage to Guiana (Thomas Dawson, 1596), sig. A4^r.

²⁴ John H. Walter, ed., King Henry V, p. xix. Further, Walter writes that "The word 'consideration' is usually glossed as 'reflection' or 'contemplation', but this is surely an unsatisfactory gloss here. Its usage in this period points to another connotation. In the Authorized Version the verb 'consider' is frequently used where it is almost equivalent to an exhortation to repent from evil doing or at least in association with evil doing (Deut. xxxii. 29; Ps. 1.22; Hag. i.5; Isa. i.3; Jer. xxiii.20; xxx. 24, etc.)" (pp. xviii-xix).

²⁵ See Nueva carónica y buen gobierno (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, codex Péruvien illustré, 1936), n.pag. This is a facsimile copy of the original manuscript in the Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

²⁶ In the opening pages of The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles (Published at the expenses of J. Harison, G. Bishop, R. Newberie, H. Denham and T. Woodccke, 1587), Holinshed mingles Classical, Biblical and other historical figures in a curious "composite" mythology of England's heroic beginnings. The battle between good and evil, between King Lucas on the one hand and the wicked Albion and Lestrigo on the other, is resolved by the timely intervention of Hercules who vanquishes and destroys the evil aggressors, defending the righteous and allowing them to establish their dominion once again (p. 4).

²⁷ John H. Walter, ed., King Henry V, note to I.i.30.

²⁸ A Revelation of the Secret Spirit (John Haviland for H. Skelton, 1623), sig. A4^r.

²⁹ The Accedence of Armorie (1562 first publ.; R. Tottell, 1591), fol. 129^v.

³⁰ Peacham, Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroycal Devices, p. 44.

³¹ Shakespeare's Military World (Berkeley and Los Angeles:

University of California Press, 1956), p. 177.

³² Delia (J. Charlwood for Simon Waterson, 1592), sig G2^V.

³³ The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes (1577; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 6^r.

³⁴ T.S. Dorsch, ed., Julius Caesar, 6th ed. (1955; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976), note to III.i.273.

³⁵ An Epitome of Cronicles. Conteyninge the whole discourse of the histories as well of this realme of England as al other coutreys, with the succesion of their kinges, the time of their reigne, and what notable actes they did: much profitable to be redde, namelye of Magistrates, and such as haue auctoritee in commo weales, gathered out of most probable auctovrs (1549, first publ.; W. Seres in aed. T. Marshe, 1559), p. 253^V. The work has three authors: Thomas Lanquet wrote the section ending at the incarnation of Christ, Thomas Cooper wrote up to the reign of Edward III, and Robert Crowley dealt with history from the time of Edward III until the reign of Elizabeth I. The edition used here is a pirated version, and was repudiated by Cooper.

³⁶ The Athenian mythologer Apollodorus, in his only surviving work Bibliotheca, believes the Hydra of Lerna had an immortal head which Hercules cut off and buried alive. See Richard Wagner's edition of Apollodori Bibliotheca (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), II.80. This is the first volume in the series Mythographi Graeci.

³⁷ The Historye of Italve. A booke exceding profitable to be red: because it intreateth of the astate of many and dyuers common weales, how they haue bene, and now be gouerned (1549, first publ.; Thomas Marshe, 1561), sig. A2^V.

³⁸ La Légende de S. Georges et les combats des croisés dans les Peintures Murales du Moyen Age (Paris: Fondation Piot, Monuments et Mémoires 44, 1950).

³⁹ The Lives of the Saints, revised by Herbert Thurston and Norah Leeson (Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1933), p. 264.

⁴⁰ La Légende Dorée, translated by Theodor de Wyzewa (Paris:

Librarie Académique, 1929), p. 228. Briefly, the legend of St. George, as recounted by de Voragine, runs as follows. A city of Libya, named Silene, was terrorised by a dragon which demanded two sheep every day from the inhabitants. When the stock of sheep ran out, the beast had to be fed on the children of the town who were chosen by lot. One day, the lot fell upon the king's daughter, Cleodolinda, and she was duly taken to the swamp where the dragon lived. Saint George happened to pass by and promptly attacked and wounded the dragon, tied it to the maid's girdle, and led it through the town, urging the townsfolk to accept Christ into their lives and undergo baptism. Shortly after killing the dragon and baptising all the inhabitants of the town, the saint suffered under the provost Dacian all the tortures the primitive mind could invent, and was finally beheaded.

⁴¹ The Actes of Englysh votaryes, comprehendynge their unchast practyses and examples by all ages, from the worldes begynnyng to thys present yeaere, collected out of their owne legendes and Chronycles (Wesel: n.p., 1546), pp. 77^r-77^v. Pollard and Redgrave, in A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, believe that the book was actually printed in London by John Day.

⁴² See Walter's Arden edition of King Henry V, pp. xvii-xxi.

⁴³ Shakespeare's History Plays (1944; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 315.

⁴⁴ Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession (J. Kingston for R. Walley, 1581), sig. B4^v.

⁴⁵ Discours de la Religion des Anciens Romains Illustré (1556; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 203.

⁴⁶ The comparison is made by John H. Walter, ed., King Henry V, note to IV.i.295-8.

⁴⁷ Eruditorium penitentie (Paris?: Antoine Caillaut? c. 1480), n. pag.

48 Adolescentia (Strassburg: Martin Flach, 1500), n. pag.

49 The print is reproduced on p. 69 of The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein, with an introduction and notes by James M. Clark (Phaidon Press Ltd., 1947). Of this cut, Clark writes: "In this, his final battle, the Knight does not submit tamely to his fate, for he is a man of mettle. Crying out in his agony, he defends himself desperately to the last, striking at Death with his sword as long as his ebbing strength permits. But it is all in vain, for his dread adversary has driven the Knight's own lance through his coat of mail and administered the fatal blow. The Knight is a striking figure with his helmet and its large plumes. Death wears chain mail. His treachery is evident: he has stabbed the Knight in the back, regardless of the laws of chivalry. The hour-glass is lying flat on the ground as if it had been overturned in the fray. The peaceful rustic scene in the distance forms a striking contrast to the warlike encounter" (p. 115).

50 Emblematvm Christianorvm Centvria (1571, first publ.; Tigvri apud Christophorum Froschouerum, 1584), p. 4^r.

51 His Practise. In two Bookes. The first intreating of the vse of the Rapier and Dagger. The second, of Honour and honorable Quarrels (T. Scarlet for J. Wolfe, 1595), sig. K3^r.

52 Hobday, "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," p. 109.

53 See Walter's edition of King Henry V, note to IV.ii.39.

54 In his introduction to the Arden edition of King Henry V, Walter (pp. xxvii-xxviii) agrees with Dover Wilson's observation that, in view of the treacherous French assault which is openly against the law of arms, Henry's actions are wholly justified. Walter goes on to argue that "Gower's remark, 'the king most worthily hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat. O! 'tis a gallant king', shows wholehearted approval of Henry's promptness in decision and his resolute determination. The rage of the epic hero leading to the slaughter of the enemy within his power is not without Virgilian precedent (see Aeneid, X and XII)" (p. xxviii).

55 Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, I, 256. Goddard summarises five scenes related to the battle at Agincourt (including the execution of prisoners) and concludes that if "Shakespeare had deliberately set out to deglorify the Battle of Agincourt in general and King Henry in particular, it would seem he could hardly have done more" (I, 256).

56 Hobday, "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," pp. 111-12.

57 Emblemata nobilitati et vulgo scitu digna singulis historijs symbola adscripta et elegantes versus historiam explicantes. Accessit Galearum expositio, & Disceptatio de origine Nobilitatis (Impressum Francoforti ad Moenum, 1593), n. pag.

58 Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una, quae tam ad exemplum apte expressa sunt, & ad aspectum pulchre depingi possunt, quam quae aut a veteribus accepta, aut inventa ab aliis hactenus extant (ex off. J. Legate, 1596?), sig. B2^r.

59 See Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, IV (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 403: "Rouen yielded in January, 1419. The Duke of Burgundy sought peace talks, and Henry sent the Earl of Warwick as his representative" (emphasis added).

60 Rich, Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession, sig. B4^v.

61 The Estate of English fugitives vnder the king of Spaine and his minsters (T. Scarlet for John Drinkwater, 1595), p. 2^v.

62 See Plate IV (p. 42) in James M. Clark's edition of Hans Holbein's The Dance of Death, titled "Adam Tills The Soil." Of this print, Clark writes: "Against a hilly background, with a flight of birds in the sky, we see Eve, scantily clad. She is suckling her child, and holding her distaff in the crook of her arm. In front of bare, gaunt branches, which contrast strongly with the leafy paradise of Eden, Adam is digging among the roots; Death is working at his side. Instead of spades they are using sharp branches. The hour-glass, which henceforward is rarely missing in these engravings, is seen on the ground" (p. 102).

⁶³ As the English equivalent of Γεώργος, ον.ό. Edward Maltby's Greek Gradus, or, Poetical Lexicon Of The Greek Language, 3rd ed. (Longman, Brown, and Co., 1850) gives "a farmer; an husbandman" (p. 151).

⁶⁴ Batman, The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes, p. 6^r.

⁶⁵ The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch (1592; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 39^v.

⁶⁶ The painting is reproduced as plate 57 in Eric Newton's book Tintoretto (Longmans, Green and Co., 1952).

⁶⁷ Tintoretto (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1911), p. 103.

Julius Caesar

Irving Ribner believes that the only generic difference between Henry V and Julius Caesar is that "the one is drawn from English history and the other from Roman."¹ Modern critics, it seems, have frequently felt the need to approach the Roman play through the English History cycles. H.M. Richmond² notices some parallels of events and characters in Julius Caesar, 2 Henry VI and Henry V. Douglas Peterson³ argues that Caesar and Richard II share a common faith in their invulnerability. Geoffrey Bullough⁴ relates the Cinna episode (Julius Caesar III.iii) to the macabre humour of the rioters in the Jack Cade scenes of 2 Henry VI. And Robert J. Lordi⁵ links Julius Caesar and the first part of Henry IV in his character comparison of Brutus and Hotspur.

Whatever the reasons critics may have for relating Julius Caesar to Shakespeare's English Histories, it is likely that the dating of the play has partially influenced the association. Julius Caesar was probably first performed in 1599. This, at least, is the view of E.K. Chambers⁶ and the Arden editor T.S. Dorsch⁷ both of whom are persuaded by a possible allusion to the play in the work of Thomas Platter, a Swiss traveller of the sixteenth century. In terms of composition, this would place the work in the period of the later History plays. It does not seem unreasonable to accept this placement as valid, particularly as the chronological coincidence appears to be reflected textually. And the present chapter views Julius Caesar as a transitional play that translates some of the ideas of the English mythology and the anti-mythology into a Roman idiom.

The English mythology we have explored previously has a number of consistent and identifiable characteristics. Both mortal and magnificent, it is ideally sustained from generation to generation, its militarist spirit finding new life through physical procreation. Canterbury, for example, urges Hal to "Look back into your mighty ancestors" (Henry V I.ii.102) and

invoke their "warlike spirit" (I.ii.104). Ely demands that the king "Awake remembrance of these valiant dead [his ancestors]" (Henry V I.ii.115) and "renew their feats" (I.ii.116). Hal is not simply the flesh and blood descendant of his ancestors. He is, as well, the rightful heir to their conquering spirit. A failure of emulation, in the English mythology, represents a failure and betrayal of inheritance. In such a world the anti-mythology prevails, perverting the images and processes of the English myth to its own unwholesome ends. Instead of peace and prosperity, there is war and destruction. Distinctions of this sort are also at work in Julius Caesar. Here is Cassius on the subject of his contemporary Romans:

Let it be who it is; for Romans now
Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors.
But woe the while! our fathers' minds are dead,
And we are govern'd with our mothers' spirits;
Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.

(I.iii.80-4)

As one prepared to adopt almost any stance in the pursuance of questionable objectives, Cassius hardly stands himself as an ideal Roman worthy of his ancestry. And, as the play's arch-malcontent, his conception of the world is always coloured by a jealous regard for Caesar's achievements. Even so, his strong emphasis on Rome's illustrious ancestry, for which there is no specific precedent in Plutarch⁸ is, of itself, revealing. When Cassius and Casca first meet in the play, some forty lines earlier, the latter identifies himself simply as "A Roman" (I.iii.41). Upon this reply, Cassius builds his refractory argument. First, there is an insult: "You are dull, Casca, and those sparks of life / That should be in a Roman you do want, / Or else you use not" (I.iii.57-9, emphasis added). Then follows a sly attack on Caesar, a lament for a betrayed Roman "spirit" (line 83), a contemptuous comment on the now "womanish" (line 84) race. Rome, once great, has succumbed to less happy times. True, Romans are the physical inheritors of their forefathers, they have "thews and limbs like to their ancestors" (line 81), but, says Cassius, their spirits are effeminate and wanting.

This sense of a nation betrayed, of a familial and national greatness lost, is one that permeates the History plays. It is perhaps not surprising that Shakespeare should choose to link in this way Julius Caesar, and the Roman plays generally, with his English tetralogies. The Elizabethans had a particular interest in Roman history.⁹ Ancient Rome, as a world conqueror, set a magnificent military example for Shakespeare's England to admire. In The Prince, Machiavelli approves of the Roman dictum that "war is not to be avoided, and can be deferred only to the advantage of the other side."¹⁰ But English writers are not so much awed by the details of Roman strategy, as by the character and splendour of the Roman military spirit. Richard Argol, in his address "To the Reader" in Gerard Leigh's The Accedence of Armorie (1591), describes the Renaissance Italians as "a people in whom as yet lie raked the old sparks of the Romayn glory."¹¹ Matthew Sutcliffe, in The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes (1593), talks of "Rome the mistres of the world for warlike discipline."¹² Robert Barret turns to the ancient example of "the Romaines valour"¹³ in his treatise The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres (1598), and Robert Johnson, in Essaies, or, Rather imperfect Offers (1607), acknowledges that the pagan "Romans were generally admirable, who neyther in their conquering age were puffed vp to insolency, nor in their crosse & vnlooked for accidentes stooped to dispaire."¹⁴ While the foreign conquests of the Classical Romans are, of themselves, remarkable, there is no doubt that Elizabethan writers were at least partly encouraged to their celebration by the knowledge that Italy and England shared the same legendary origin. The English, descended from the Trojan Brute, saw, in the birth of Rome, the mirror of their own beginnings. We need look no further than Pliny's The Secrets and Wonders of the Worlde, translated into English by I.A.¹⁵ in 1566, for evidence that Italy's genealogical tree is rooted in Old Troy. The common ancestral heritage is one to which a number of sixteenth and early seventeenth century writers appeal, either implicitly or explicitly. John Stow believes that "As Rome the chiefe Citie of the world to glorifie it selfe, drew her originall from the Gods, Goddesses, and demy Gods, by the Troian progeny.

So this famous Citie of London for greater glorie, and in emulation of Rome, deriueth it selfe from the very same originall."¹⁶ In Of the knowledge and conducte of warres (1578), Thomas Procter believes that Roman glory (symbolised by the god Mars) has waned and must now be replaced by an English Dardanian-based mythology:

And Englyshe noble ensyignes shall,
in foreyne countreys farre,
Aduaunced be, and martyall Brute,
Shalbee the kynge of warre.
For Mars nowe waxinge olde and lame,
dothe meane for to resygne,
Hys martyall force to Englyshe prynce,
decreed by doome deuyne.¹⁷

In similar vein, Sir Walter Raleigh argues that "the militarie vertue of the English, prevailling against all manner of difficulties, ought to be preferred by that of the Romans, which was assisted with all advantages that could be desired."¹⁸

Though the ancient Romans, as foreign conquerors, are to be admired, there is also a rather unsavoury aspect to their history that does not escape the notice of English commentators. John Trevisa's translation (first published in 1482) of Ranulph Higden's Polycronycon puts an ominous slant on Rome's Trojan roots, as it describes how Nero set fire to a large section of Rome so that "he wolde see the lykenesse of Troye whan it was set a fyre."¹⁹ Ancient Rome, under the sway of civil war and misrule, becomes a warning lesson to the English commonwealth. William Thomas, in The Historye of Italye (1561), purposes to reveal to his English readers the havoc brought about by civil strife in Italy--strife that leads, in time, to the "vtter destruction of realmes, and subuercion of common wealthes."²⁰ Thomas Lodge's play The Wounds of Civil War (1594) views the sad fate of Rome in the same manner:

Unhappy Rome and Romans thrice accurst
That oft with triumphs fill'd your city walls
With kings and conquering rulers of the world,
Now to eclipse in top of all thy pride

Through civil discords and domestic broils.²¹

But perhaps William Fulbecke's An historicall collection of the continuall factions of the Romans and Italians stands as one of the strongest indictments of Rome's internal squabbles.²²

Having explained that the first purpose of his book is to reveal "the mischiefes of discord and ciuill discention" (sig. A2^r), Fulbecke goes on to warn: "Let Rome in this history be a witnesse, that a slipperie ascending was alwaies accompanied with a headlong discent, and that peace is a great deale better than triumph" (sigs. A2^r-A2^v).

Shakespeare appears to take full advantage of the very strong associations, in the literature and, no doubt, in the minds of his contemporaries, between English and Roman history. We have touched, already, on the ancestral theme, but there are other elements of the English myth and the anti-myth that are openly conscripted into the dramatist's vision of the Roman world. In the English anti-mythology, where there is a disjunction of the spiritual and the physical, death is the means whereby the soul may escape the prison of the flesh. On receipt of the news that his father has been brutally murdered, Edward, in 3 Henry VI, cries out: "Now my soul's palace is become a prison. / Ah, would she break from hence, that this my body / Might in the ground be closed up in rest!" (II.i.74-6). This notion, as has been observed in an earlier chapter, is of Biblical derivation, but, given Rome's high estimation of suicide "as an act of moral courage and nobility,"²³ it is fitting that Shakespeare should transpose the familiar scriptural theme into a pagan context. Once more, Cassius is speaking--again without warrant from Plutarch:

Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,

Never lacks power to dismiss itself.

(I.iii.90-7. Emphasis added.)

The soul trapped in towers, walls of brass, dungeons, bonds of iron--these are the images of "encirclement" that compose the sad picture of a Romanised anti-mythology. The act of suicide, more peculiar to a Roman military ethos than to its English equivalent, here endows an emblem familiar to the History plays with a distinctly Roman flavour. The mechanism of "two-way" imagistic significance may also be deciphered in the extract. The idea, implicit in Cassius' defiant statement, that the flesh must die if the spirit is to be freed, gathers a dark irony in the second half of the play when Cassius and his co-plotters discover that, in killing the body of Caesar, they have in fact unleashed "Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge, / With Até by his side come hot from hell" (III.i.271-2). And it is Caesar's spirit that proves the bane of the conspirators' physical lives, driving them from Rome like transgressors chased from paradise, and stalking them relentlessly to their deaths. The appearance of Caesar's ghost to Brutus in V.i--a clear departure from Plutarch--makes visually explicit their profound miscalculation.²⁴ When Cassius speaks of the "strength of spirit" (line 95), then, he unconsciously shadows his own meaning with a second. In the course of the play, we come to view the "spirit" as both prisoner (Cassius' spirit) and tormentor (Caesar's spirit), at once the victim of the flesh and the conqueror of the same. Robert C. Reynolds²⁵ has brought attention to a number of "two-way" images in Julius Caesar, though he does not use that term and makes no parallel reference to the History plays. In particular, he examines the use of the word "Colossus":

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

(I.ii.135-8)

Acknowledging the traditional supposition that the word suggests "the idea of impressiveness" (p. 332), Reynolds goes on to

demonstrate, by reference to Castiglione's The Book of The Courtier, that it may also be an expression of condemnation. On the one hand, "Colossus" compliments the Roman leader, but, on the other, the same word is in tune with Cassius' desire to vilify Caesar. Reynolds concludes that "Caesar is a Colossus in his overwhelming mastery, in the ultimate triumph of the spirit of Caesar which gives direction and form to the Roman state: he is also, personally, a hollow man. The single term portrays both Caesars" (p. 333). In fact, given the ironies to which Cassius' somewhat biased perspective is prone, our own interpretation would be that "Colossus" has different significances for different sectors of the Roman populace. To Cassius, and the conspiratorial party, it is a synonym for Caesar's tyranny; to the plebeians, it is an expression of Caesar's magnificent stature as ruler of the empire. Be this as it may, Shakespeare shows himself willing in Julius Caesar to retain the "two-way" imagistic technique of the English History plays, formulating in a single word the potential for two opposing connotations.

The influence of the English History plays extends into other areas of Julius Caesar. In 1 Henry IV, the dramatist fully unveils the process of "bogus mythologisation" that had been promised since the First Tetralogy. Both Hotspur and the Earl of Douglas style their lives in terms of a preconceived mythology of Martian and Herculean excellences. These myths, sustained by the imagination and the spoken word, are unable to endure the vagaries of fortune and the hard realities of battleground action. Bogus mythologisation also has a place in Julius Caesar, but, in evaluating its function here, we must first examine the rôle of Caesar.

It is the opinion of those who seek to condemn Caesar that he is, or was, a tyrant. John Dover Wilson has thrown in his lot with the conspirators, describing Caesar as "a Roman Tamburlaine of illimitable ambition and ruthless irresistible genius; a monstrous tyrant who ruined 'the mightiest and most flourishing commonwealth that the world will ever see.'"²⁶ Roy Walker surmises from Wilson's argument that "the play indubitably

shows the ultimate triumph of 'Tyranny.'" ²⁷ Yet, looking at the play, there seems to be little that we could truly describe as "tyrannous," in the modern sense of that word. True, Caesar puts to death Marullus and Flavius for pulling scarfs off his images (I.ii.283-5), and will not repeal the banishment order on Publius Cimber (III.i.58-73), but such penalties are not overly savage in a harsh Roman context. Even so, at first glance, Shakespeare's portrayal of Caesar appears to be less sympathetic than that of Plutarch. M.W. MacCallum argues that "it is not difficult to understand the indignation of the critics who complain that Shakespeare has here given a libel rather than a portrait of Caesar, and has substituted impertinent cavil for sympathetic interpretation."²⁸ MacCallum²⁹ notes in some detail Shakespeare's alteration of Plutarch's original Caesar, but one deviation not touched upon concerns the tendency of Shakespeare's Caesar to mythologise himself. Plutarch's hero shows little inclination towards this end--in fact, it is his rather modest lament, at one point, that he has achieved nothing worthy of note: "I have good cause to be heavy, when King Alexander, being no older than myself is now, had in old time won so many nations and countries; and that I hitherunto have done nothing worthy of my self?"³⁰ These sentiments, arising from a visit to a temple in Spain dedicated to the triumphs of Alexander, are also recorded in Antonio de Guevara's The Diall Of Princes, translated by Thomas North in 1557, in which it is made even clearer that Caesar holds himself in low estimation: "I (being as I am) a Romane, neuer did yet thing worthy of prayse in my life, nor shall leaue any renowne of mee after my death."³¹ John Lydgate,³² too, recounts the anecdote in The Serpent of Division (1422), and though he accuses Caesar of pride (p. 50) and describes Caesar's unsuccessful request for a Triumph on one of his returns to Rome (p. 54), there appears to be no suggestion that Caesar sought to mythologise himself. And the Julius Caesar commended to us by Robert Barret in The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres (1598) as being "more considerate and wise"³³ than other great military leaders hardly strikes us as a man susceptible to the vanity of deific aspirations. This

is not to deny that some Elizabethan historians believe that Caesar was made a god in his own lifetime. William Fulbecke, for example, writes that after Caesar's fourth Triumph "his statue also was placed amongst the statues of the auncient kings"³⁴ and goes on to record that "the moneth of Iuly was then also cosecrated to Iulius, as the moneth of March is to Mars" (p. 166). The point is simply that, in devising a Caesar who is apt to mythologise his own life, Shakespeare is not only at variance with Plutarch but with a number of other writers as well. In this respect, there is a suggestion, if not a full declaration, of intent.

Returning to the play itself, then, the accusations of "tyranny" levelled at Caesar by other characters may well have something to do with Caesar's apparently outrageous mythological pretensions. Certainly, his detractors are worried by his claim to a myth stature, to godliness, in effect. In the opening scene of the play, Flavius is at pains to "de-mythologise" Caesar, insisting that "no images / Be hung with Caesar's trophies" (I.i.69-70), and adding, hopefully, that

These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men,
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

(I.i.73-6)

Cassius is consciously ironic when he talks of "immortal Caesar" (I.ii.60), openly resentful when he grumbles that Caesar, a man no mightier than himself, "Is now become a god" (I.ii.116), and crudely sarcastic when he recalls "'Tis true, this god did shake" (I.ii.121). Brutus fears that Caesar, like an ambitious climber, will achieve the summit of his hopes and then spurn "the base degrees / By which he did ascend" (II.i.26-7). Caesar, himself, does nothing to allay these suspicions. He claims that he fears nothing (I.ii.211-12), that his very face will vanquish foes (II.ii.11-12), that he is more dangerous than danger itself (II.ii.44-5), that his is no ordinary mortality (III.i.37), that he is as constant as the northern star (III.i.60) and as unmoveable as Olympus (III.i.74).

It is a simple matter to refute such claims, and many critics have done so. Caesar's infirmities and apprehensions are everywhere in evidence: his secret fear of Cassius (I.ii.194-5), his hearing defect (I.ii.213), his epileptic condition (I.ii.251-2), his superstition (II.i.199-201), his indecision (II.ii.41-91). Anne Paolucci describes Caesar as "a curious unresolved mixture of superstition, vanity, physical weakness, cunning, insight, and political acumen."³⁵ A few commentators, though, have sought to impose some kind of order and resolution on this curious mix. Ernest Schanzer, for instance, writes of a contrast, pervading the whole play, "between Caesar's frailties of body and character and the strength of his spirit."³⁶ But, perhaps more usefully to our own purposes, R.A. Foakes, writing with particular reference to Caesar's admission that Cassius would frighten him "if my name were liable to fear" (I.ii.199), makes the observation that "Caesar may be afraid in himself, but his name, his reputation must be impervious to fear."³⁷ The point is of great significance to the argument of this chapter. It is apparently through his reputation that Caesar not only rules but awes--a "synthetic" reputation constructed out of words and report, and akin to, but rather more effective than, the bogus mythologisations of Hotspur and Douglas in 1 Henry IV.

As early as the first scene of Julius Caesar, there is a hint that Caesar's mythology of magnificence may, in part at least, be a political manufacture. The Second Citizen tells Flavius and Marullus that he and his fellow plebeians "make holiday to see Caesar, and to rejoice in his triumph" (I.i.32-3). Marullus, if not actually astonished by this report, certainly feigns astonishment:

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
 What tributaries follow him to Rome,
 To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?
 (I.i.33-5)

Caesar has triumphed over Pompey's kindred, we are told at I.i.52, but this is hardly a victory in the noble Roman tradition. Civil war in Shakespeare's English History plays is seen as a rather sordid manifestation of the anti-mythology and, judging by his

rebuke, Marullus would afford it no higher standing in Rome.³⁸ "Wherefore rejoice?" he asks, and no-one offers an answer. Yet, the people do rejoice and are more than willing to celebrate the return of Caesar. Plutarch provides us with a somewhat muted account of Caesar's home-coming: "This was the last war that Caesar made. But the Triumph he made into Rome for the same did as much offend the Romans, and more, than anything that ever he had done before."³⁹ This widespread sense of indignation we do not feel in the opening scene of Julius Caesar. In fact, the opposite is true. Marullus and Flavius come across as outnumbered defenders of some high Roman ideal, striving fiercely to stifle the enthusiasm and euphoria of the common people. The dramatist clearly intends to show that Caesar's reception far outweighs his actual achievement. Somehow, this physically weak and unimposing man is able to command not only the allegiance but also the adulation of a significant segment of the Roman population. Caesar may betray a few clues to his success in his exchanges with fellow patricians. His tacit admission to Antony that he fears Cassius but cannot be seen to do so has already been touched upon. We may also look to the incident in II.ii when his servant brings news that the augurers advise him not to leave his home. He responds: "Caesar should be a beast without a heart, / If he should stay at home to-day for fear" (II.ii.42-3) but it is not so much his own conscience he worries about as the impression his absence would make on his reputation in the public world. This becomes evident a few lines later when, pricked by Decius' suggestion that the Senate might whisper "Lo, Caesar is afraid" (II.ii.101) if he should absent himself, he immediately inveighs against his wife's foolishness (II.ii.105-6), and determines he will go. If, as Douglas Peterson⁴⁰ and Myron Taylor⁴¹ have argued, Julius Caesar believes in his own invulnerability, the thought of staying at home would not have crossed his mind--and Cassius would not have represented to him the threat that he does. But this point is of little importance. What really matters is the opinion of the Roman public. If Caesar is to keep the crowds chanting his name in the streets of Rome, if he is to retain power in the

city that Matthew Sutcliffe calls "the mistress of the world for warlike discipline," he must ensure that others think he is invulnerable. It is perhaps for this reason that when the Soothsayer warns him to "Beware the ides of March" (I.ii.23), Caesar spurns him: "He is a dreamer; let us leave him. Pass" (I.ii.24). This response is Shakespeare's invention. While Plutarch⁴² records the Soothsayer's first warning, he does not record Caesar's immediate response. Some commentators⁴³ have pointed to the incident as an example of Caesar's misjudgement and, certainly, in ignoring the Soothsayer's advice, Caesar commits a disastrous error. Nonetheless, if Caesar is to maintain any kind of confidence in the verbal mythology he has proposed for himself, he must reply in the way he does. The public nature of the Soothsayer's warning necessitates a swift public rejection. With the eyes of the plebeians upon him, Caesar cannot afford to betray even a trace of fear or apprehension. In the privacy of his own home, though, he is more than willing to consider the advice of the augurers (II.ii). And when he next meets the Soothsayer (III.i), he has clearly not forgotten the prophet's words: "The ides of March are come" (line 1). In public, Caesar must construct and sustain his mythology of words. Always, he must be the unassailable god. This synthetic myth makes real achievement redundant—it is reputation, drawn out of words and token actions, that is of importance.

The patrician conspirators, who resent Caesar's efforts to portray himself in mythic manner, are themselves prone to a form of bogus mythologisation. Here, for example, is Cassius' account of the ill-fated swimming match between himself and Caesar, in the course of which the latter succumbed to early exhaustion:

I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
 Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
 The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of the Tiber
 Did I the tired Caesar.

(I.ii.112-15)

In his Historia Britonum, Geoffrey of Monmouth credits Julius Caesar with the following: "In truth we Romans and the Britons have the same origin, since both are descended from the Trojan

race. Our first father, after the destruction of Troy, was Aeneas; theirs, Brutus, whose father was Sylvius, the son of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas."⁴⁴ Aeneas, the legendary progenitor of the Roman race, stands as a model to the Roman soldier, having endured great hardships in his pilgrimage from the city of Troy to the shores of Italy. Cassius could hardly have named a more illustrious "ancestor" with whom to compare his own actions. But the allusion to Aeneas' rescue of his father--an anecdote not recorded in Plutarch's chapters on the lives of Julius Caesar, Marcus Brutus, or Marcus Antonius--is significant in another way. In The Aeneid, Aeneas tells his father, as Troy burns around them, "come now, you must let them lift you onto my back. I will hold my shoulders ready for you; this labour of love will be no weight to me"⁴⁵ (emphasis added). Ovid's Metamorphoses also celebrates Aeneas' deed: "The hero Aeneas, the son of Venus, carried away upon his shoulders the city's sacred images, and with them another burden, equally sacred, his venerable father"⁴⁶ (emphasis added). The emblem books, as we saw in the first chapter, use Aeneas' act as a consummate illustration of filial love and devotion, Geoffrey Whitney titling his print of the hero carrying his father "Pietas filiorum in parentes."⁴⁷ Bearing in mind this traditional interpretation of the Aeneas myth, and our earlier point that the military hero Aeneas is one of Rome's most famous ancestors, we may begin to decipher Shakespeare's intentions. In perverting an emblem of benevolent kinship into a rather malevolent illustration of Caesar's ineptitude, Cassius not only betrays his own petty prejudices but casts a rather degrading shadow upon the ancestral motif itself. Further, and perhaps more importantly, Cassius, while prepared to shun Caesar's attempts at self-mythologisation, here seeks to style his own moment of glory in terms of Dardanian myth. But the comparison is fraught with ironies. Not only are the sentiments and the details of the Tiber débâcle obviously out of tune with those of the original mythic episode, but, also, the setting and significance turn it into something more akin to a transient domestic drama than to the momentous destruction of antiquity's greatest civilisation. It is a long journey from the selflessness

of Aeneas to the petty jealousy of Cassius, but an even longer one from the burning ruins of once mighty Troy, torn asunder by conquering Greek armies, to the waters of the Tiber and a rather ill-advised swimming contest.

If Cassius' strained mythic analogy suggests that the plotters may be inclined to mythologise their own actions in a manner no more convincing than Caesar's attempts in that direction, then Brutus confirms that suspicion. Cassius brings up the issue of Brutus' ancestry in the first act of the play:

O! you and I have heard our fathers say
There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd
Th' eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king.

(I.ii.158-61)

Plutarch opens his account of the life of Marcus Brutus with these words: "Marcus Brutus came of that Junius Brutus for whom the ancient Romans made his statue of brass to be set up in the Capitol with the images of the kings, holding a naked sword in his hand, because he had valiantly put down the Tarquins from their kingdom of Rome."⁴⁸ Yet, the question of Brutus' noble militarist pedigree is not one raised by Plutarch in connection with his reasons for joining the conspiracy against Caesar. Shakespeare, on the other hand, accords a great deal of importance to the matter of Brutus' forefathers. As we have seen, Cassius deftly touches upon the ancestral theme (I.ii.158-61, above) in his first conversation with Brutus. And it takes only Cassius' "anonymous" letter to bring the motif of illustrious ancestry firmly to the centre of Brutus' consciousness:

Shall Rome stand under one man's awe? What, Rome?
My ancestors did from the streets of Rome
The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king.
'Speak, strike, redress!' Am I entreated
To speak and strike? O Rome, I make thee promise,
If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!

(II.i.52-8)

Analysing these lines, Ronald Berman argues that Brutus' "great task is to extirpate monarchy--and his greatest temptation is to relive the glory of his ancestor in doing so."⁴⁹ The point seems a valid one. In the revivification of great acts past, Brutus seeks not only to exonerate the putsch against Caesar, but to mythologise the murder itself. When he imagines the impending assassination of Caesar, he urges his co-conspirators to "carve him as a dish fit for the gods" (II.i.173). They are, he would have it, "sacrificers, but not butchers" (II.i.166). But it is butchery. Not only does Shakespeare alter Plutarch's "three-and-twenty wounds"⁵⁰ to "three and thirty wounds" (V.i.53), but he has Brutus declare ironically that, were Caesar not so dangerous, his slaying would have been "a savage spectacle" (III.i.224). The glorious sacrifice becomes, to use Maurice Charney's words, "a fruitless act of butchery,"⁵¹ and the efforts to place the murder of Caesar within some grand mythic design are ever frustrated by the brute realities of the act. The ancestral mythology will be completely reversed, anti-mythologised if you like, as Brutus, unlike his famous forebearers, finds that he and not the "tyrant" is driven out of Rome. Yet, even after the bloody deed is done, Cassius and Brutus are oblivious to the possible consequences of their action:

CASSIUS. Stoop then, and wash. How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

BRUTUS. How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,
That now on Pompey's basis lies along
No worthier than the dust!

(III.i.112-17)

Several critics⁵² have shown that metaphors of actors and of acting are strong in Julius Caesar. John Anson, in "Julius Caesar: The Politics of the Hardened Heart," writes, with special reference to the lines above, "In the very performance of Caesar's assassination, the conspirators see themselves as the heroes of an archetypal drama, to be re-enacted again and again throughout human history."⁵³ While Anson may emphasise the "archetypal" nature of the act, he does not comment upon the pretentious myth

that Cassius and Brutus would vainly build out of the acting image. Even as he utters the macabre command "Stoop then, and wash" (line 112), Cassius believes that the murder of Caesar sets an heroic precedent. And Brutus, ostensibly a sober and conservative figure, cannot himself resist the strange urge to celebrate their act as some kind of myth exemplar that countless generations will seek to emulate. As one critic has noticed, "The eyes of the conspirators are on posterity, which they are sure will approve their present acts."⁵⁴ It is one of the great ironies of the play that the murder of Caesar will bestow upon Brutus and Cassius an enduring notoriety, but in a sense quite opposite to their own estimation.

The people, who were ready to mythologise Caesar in place of Pompey, are fickle enough, at least for a time, to mythologise Brutus in place of Caesar:

ALL. Live, Brutus! live, live!

1 PLEB. Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

2 PLEB. Give him a statue with his ancestors.

3 PLEB. Let him be Caesar.

4 PLEB. Caesar's better parts
Shall be crown'd in Brutus.

1 PLEB. We'll bring him to his house with shouts and
clamours.

(III.ii.47-52)

This reception of Brutus after he has addressed the plebeians runs quite contrary to Plutarch's original: "When Brutus began to speak, they gave him quiet audience. Howbeit, immediately after, they showed that they were not all contented with the murder. For when another called Cinna would have spoken and began to accuse Caesar, they fell into a great uproar among them and marvellously reviled him."⁵⁵ Shakespeare's plebeians go to some pains to construct a mythology of magnificence around Brutus, heralding him as a triumphant conqueror. Brutus, to be sure, precipitates his mythologisation—not through the act of killing Caesar, but through the words that follow in his speech to the populace. I am honourable (III.ii.15-16), he tells them,

and Caesar was my friend (lines 19-21). What I did, I did for Rome (lines 23-4), he claims. Besides, Brutus argues, "Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?" (lines 24-6). He offers no proof for this, no irrefutable evidence that Caesar held the people in bondage, or intended to do so--he merely returns to the theme that he weeps for valiant Caesar (lines 26-7, and 30) and to the rather vague accusation that Caesar was "ambitious" (lines 29 and 32). The whole argument seems weak and repetitive, and so it is. But it convinces the people for a time, and that is important. To them, Brutus becomes a god, a living mythic hero--though the double reference to Brutus' home ("Bring him with triumph home unto his house" shouts the First Plebeian at III.ii.48, and four lines later the demand is repeated) places the archetypal conqueror in something of a domestic context. The irony is intentional. Those questions that Marullus sought to ask of the plebeians in the very first scene of the play, Shakespeare intends us to ask here. Why bring Brutus "with triumph" to his house? Why give him a statue "with his ancestors"? What great act merits the hope that Caesar's better parts "Shall be crown'd in Brutus"? The mythology is always vulnerable. Strangely, having achieved the adulation of the wavering multitude, Brutus, unlike Caesar, is incapable of sustaining it. Though he is able to inspire the myth, Brutus does not seem to grasp how he has inspired it, does not truly understand the verbal mechanism that triggers his deification. Fatally, he allows Antony the chance to speak. And the bogus myth, created with a few words, is soon dismantled with a few words.

Brutus may learn something from this miscalculation. The matter of Portia's death has long troubled critics. Brutus makes it quite clear at IV.iii.145 that he is aware of his wife's death: "Portia is dead." Yet, some forty lines later, he responds to Messala's news that Portia is dead in a manner suggesting that the information is new to him:

MESSALA. Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell:

For certain she is dead, and by strange manner.

BRUTUS. Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala.

With meditating that she must die once,

I have the patience to endure it now.

MESSALA. Even so great men great losses should endure.

(IV.iii.186-91)

The Arden editor, T.S. Dorsch, follows the line of Resch and Macmillan in taking Messala's news to be "the original version of the announcement of Portia's death, not clearly cancelled in the MS. when the revelation to Cassius was added."⁵⁶ Brents Stirling argues that "there is no real textual evidence of rewriting, interpolation or excision."⁵⁷ Brutus, he suggests, is anxious to proceed with the important business in hand, and his terse response to Messala reflects his "frustrated haste toward practical action" (p. 216). This, though, does not explain why Brutus allows Messala's preamble to develop (IV.iii.177-85)--a preamble obviously directed towards the "revelation" of Portia's death; nor does it explain why a false Stoic pose on Brutus' part should be any more effective in silencing Messala than a straight admission that news of Portia's death had already been received. Even so, Stirling's belief that the repeated recitation of Portia's death is as Shakespeare wanted it may be defensible on other grounds. Caesar's "synthetic" reputation was cunningly built upon words and token actions--a far more subtle and effective construct than the coarse mythologisations of the conspirators. Could it be that Brutus, even at this late hour, at last identifies something of the method of Caesar's myth, and defines the elusive formula that he stumbled across, but did not recognise, in the Forum? Messala is clearly impressed by Brutus' impassive acceptance of such ill tidings: "Even so great men great losses should endure" (line 191). Yet, the impression is produced not by Brutus' immediate response to the news of his wife's death, but by what Messala thinks is Brutus' immediate response to the news of his wife's death. It is this small verbal illusion that manufactures an instant myth. As he bids farewell to Portia, advises Messala that "We must die," and adds, briefly, that the certainty of death enables him to endure his wife's loss, Brutus may revel in the tardy knowledge that great reputations do not, of necessity, require great actions.

Julius Caesar

Notes

¹ The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, 2nd ed., (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 5.

² Shakespeare's Political Plays (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 49, 191, 218, and 224.

³ "'Wisdom Consumed in Confidence': An Examination of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Quarterly, 16 (1965), 19-28.

⁴ The comparison appears in Bullough's edition of Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, V (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 46.

⁵ "Brutus and Hotspur," Shakespeare Quarterly, 27 (1976), 177-85. I am indebted to Lordi's critical bibliography on p. 177.

⁶ Chambers' research in this direction is noted by T.S. Dorsch, ed., Julius Caesar, 6th ed. (1955; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976), p. vii.

⁷ See Dorsch's discussion of the play's date of composition in his edition of Julius Caesar, pp. vii-viii.

⁸ I have used, throughout, T.J.B. Spencer's edition of Shakespeare's Plutarch (1964; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968).

⁹ Several papers have dealt with the peculiarly Elizabethan character of Shakespeare's Romans. See, for example, Paul A. Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," PMLA, 64 (1949), 221-35; and T.J.B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," Shakespeare Survey, 10 (1957), 27-38.

¹⁰ The Prince and The Discourses, with an introduction by Max Lerner (New York: Random House, Inc., 1940), p. 11. The Prince, in this edition, is translated into English by Luigi Ricci. Il Principe was first published in 1513.

¹¹ The Accedence of Armorie (1562, first publ.; R. Tottel, 1591), sig. A5^r. Gerard Leigh's surname is sometimes found in the form "Legh."

¹² The Practice, Proceedings, And Lawes of armes, described out of the doings of most valiant and expert Captaines, and confirmed both by ancient, and moderne examples, and praecedents (deputies of Christopher Barker, 1593), sig. B3^r.

¹³ The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres, Discoursed in Dialogue wise (R. Field for W. Ponsonby, 1598), p. 2.

¹⁴ Essaies, or, Rather imperfect Offers (1601, first publ.; for J. Bache, 1607), sig. B3^r.

¹⁵ The Secrets and Wonders of the Worlde. A Booke Ryght rare and straunge, contayning many excellent properties, giuen to Man, Beastes, Foules, Fishes, and Serpents, Trees and Plants, translated out of P. de Changy's French abridgement by I.A. (1566, trans. first publ.; T. Hacket, 1587), sig. B4^v.

¹⁶ A Svrvey of London (J. Windet for John Wolfe, 1598), p. 1. These are the opening words of the book.

¹⁷ Of the knowledge and conducte of warres, two bookes, latelye wrytten and sett foorth, profitable for suche as delight in Hystories, or martyall affayres, and necessarye for this present tyme (In aedibus Richardi Tottelli, 1578), lines 13-20 of the prefatory poem.

¹⁸ Sir Walter Raleigh: Selections from his Writings, edited with an introduction and notes, by G.E. Hadow (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917), p. 96. This extract comes from The Historie of the World (first published in 1614).

¹⁹ Polycronycon, trans. J. Trevisa (Southwerke: Peter Treueris, 1527), fol. 154^v.

²⁰ The Historye of Italye (1549, first publ.; Thomas Marshe, 1561), sig. A2^v (preface).

²¹ I.i.298-302 (Antony speaking). The text used is The Wounds of Civil War, ed. Joseph W. Houppert (Edward Arnold, 1969). The

play was first published in 1594.

²² An historicall collection of the continuall factions of the Romans and Italians. An abridgement or rather a bridge of Roman histories (1601, first publ.; T. East for R. More, 1608).

²³ These are the words of Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 207. Charney cites the Roman praise of suicide as one of the three arguments for the Roman plays as a group--the other two being the use of Roman costume, and the common source in North's Plutarch (pp. 207-18).

²⁴ While Plutarch suggests that a spirit did visit Brutus, there is no indication that the spirit was Caesar's ghost. See Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 100.

²⁵ "Ironie Epithet in Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), 329-33.

²⁶ John Dover Wilson makes this remark in the introduction to his edition of Julius Caesar (Cambridge: The University Press, 1949), p. xxv.

²⁷ "The Northern Star: An Essay on the Roman Plays," in Shakespeare Quarterly, 2 (1951), p. 289.

²⁸ Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 223.

²⁹ MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, pp. 212-32.

³⁰ Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 31.

³¹ APXONTOPOLONION, Or The Diall Of Princes: Containig The Golden And Famous Booke of Marcus Avrelivs, Sometime Emperour of Rome, trans. Thomas North (1557, trans. first publ.; Bernard Alsop, 1619), "The Avthovrs' Prologue" (n. pag.).

³² The Serpent of Division, edited, with introduction, notes and a glossary by Henry Noble MacCracken (Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1911), p. 63.

³³ Barret, The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres, p. 8:

"Alexander esteemed men of litle stature, for most valiant and hardie: Pyrrhus, per contra, liked the goodlie, tall and large proportioned men: but Iulius Caesar, as more considerate and wise, rather chose men of meane stature, as naturallie strong, of determinate minds and courage, and capable of counsell and prudence."

34 Fulbecke, An historicall collection of the continuall factions of the Romans and Italians, p. 166.

35 "The Tragico Hero in Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Quarterly, 11 (1960), p. 330.

36 "The Problem of Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Quarterly, 6 (1955), p. 301.

37 "An Approach to Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Quarterly, 5 (1954), p. 265.

38 Plutarch mentions the Romans' aversion to civil war in his life of Julius Caesar. In Shakespeare's Plutarch, ed. Spencer, Plutarch tells us that the Romans were offended by Caesar's triumphant entry into Rome "because he had not overcome captains that were strangers, nor barbarous kings, but had destroyed the sons of the noblest man [Pompey] in Rome, whom fortune had overthrown. And, because he had plucked up his race by the roots, men did not think it meet for him to triumph so for the calamities of his country, rejoicing at a thing for the which he had but one excuse to allege in his defence unto the gods and men--that he was compelled to do that he did" (pp. 76-7).

39 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 76.

40 Peterson, "'Wisdom Consumed in Confidence': An Examination of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar," 19-28.

41 In his article entitled "Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and the Irony of History," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), Taylor argues that Caesar's "error lies precisely in believing that he is no longer a man. Playing the role of Caesar has cost Julius Caesar his life" (p. 306).

42 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, pp. 87-8: "there

was a certain soothsayer that had given Caesar warning long time afore, to take heed of the day of the Ides of March (which is the fifteenth of the month), for on that day he should be in great danger."

43 For example, E.A.J. Honigmann, in Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies (London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1976), referring to I.ii.208-10, reminds us that Shakespeare "had already undermined our confidence in Caesar's judgement of men; Caesar had gazed intently at the Soothsayer ('Set him before me; let me see his face'), and had erred disastrously in weighing him up, as even the semi-educated spectator could not fail to know" (p. 51).

44 The British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth, 2nd ed., rev. and cor. by J.A. Giles (James Bohn, 1842), p. 62. According to G.H. Gerould, in his article "King Arthur and Politics," Speculum, 2 (1927), Geoffrey issued his history between 1136 and 1138.

45 Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. W.F. Jackson Knight (1956; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), p. 72 (Bk. II).

46 The Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 302 (Bk. XIII).

47 A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586), p. 163.

48 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 102.

49 "A Note on the Motives of Marcus Brutus," Shakespeare Quarterly, 23 (1972), p. 199.

50 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 95.

51 Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, p. 49: "The murder of Caesar proves to be not a loving sacrifice, but only a fruitless act of butchery, and its bloodiness is stressed as significantly as the murder of Duncan in Macbeth."

52 Though many commentators have touched upon the theme of "acting" in the Roman plays, we may perhaps pay particular

attention to two detailed and persuasive papers on the subject of "acting" in Julius Caesar: John Anson, "Julius Caesar: The Politics of the Hardened Heart," Shakespeare Studies, 2 (1966), 11-33; and John W. Velz, "'If I Were Brutus Now . . .': Role Playing in Julius Caesar," Shakespeare Studies, 4 (1968), 149-59.

⁵³ Anson, "Julius Caesar: The Politics of the Hardened Heart," p. 11.

⁵⁴ These are, once more, the words of Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 126.

⁵⁶ Dorsch, ed., Julius Caesar, note to IV.iii.180-94. In the belief that Messala's announcement of Portia's death is, in fact, an original version that ought to have been cancelled, Dorsch brackets IV.iii.180-94 in his edition.

⁵⁷ "Brutus and the Death of Portia," Shakespeare Quarterly, 10 (1959), p. 211.

Antony and Cleopatra

The tensions of divided loyalty in Antony and Cleopatra have challenged the imaginations and ingenuity of many critics. Hazlitt speaks of a duel between "Roman pride and Eastern magnificence,"¹ a century later M.W. MacCallum argues, of Mark Antony, "the life at Rome and the life at Alexandria both tug at his heart-strings,"² and Eugene Waith insists that the "central problem remains the validity of Cleopatra's, as opposed to Caesar's, ideal."³ Some commentators have further articulated the mechanism of tension by relating it to structural and verbal perspectives, pointing to the visual alternation of Roman and Egyptian worlds, as Granville-Barker⁴ has done in Prefaces to Shakespeare, and to differing verbal textures that serve to identify and distinguish these worlds, the latter approach best exemplified in the work of Maurice Charney.⁵

Few critics have sought to examine the play's tensions in terms of its myth fabric, and there appears to be little agreement amongst those who have as to which of the Classical motifs is the most significant. Three important approaches may be detected. Eugene Waith and J. Leeds Barroll put emphasis on the rôle of Hercules in the play. J.F. Danby and Raymond B. Waddington stress the eminence of the Mars-Venus entanglement. Michael Lloyd sees Isis as central to our understanding of Cleopatra.

Eugene Waith⁶ views Antony as the *Virtus Heroica*, a hero of Herculean proportions whose flaws are dwarfed by the sheer magnitude of his achievements. In his book The Herculean Hero he positions Antony into the broad Herculean framework he sets for himself in his task of covering the works of four dramatists (pp. 113-21). Not surprisingly, such an all-embracing framework tends to rely more heavily on an appeal to general characteristics of the mythic hero and Antony than on a close comparison of career details. The common denominator must be loose and fairly flexible if it is to be of use, and the book's discussion of Shakespeare's play is both strengthened and weakened by this

approach: strengthened because it establishes Antony and Cleopatra within something of a coherent Herculean tradition, but weakened always by the nagging doubt that broad comparison is apt to overlook subtleties of significance. Waith may talk, for example, of a "Hercules unmanned by Omphale" (p. 113) but he fails to link this idea adequately with the question of Antony's relation to Cleopatra and the series of crucial emasculating references that appertain to it. J. Leeds Barroll,⁷ in an article entitled "Enobarbus' Description of Cleopatra," views Antony's choice between Rome and Egypt in terms of a popular sixteenth century emblem depicting Hercules' choice between Virtue and Vice. Barroll notes that "seldom in the Renaissance is Hercules a mere god of battle; he is always a figure of morality, however ambivalent" (p. 73) and he goes on to argue that Antony's final allegiance to Cleopatra is, in fact, a surrender to what he calls a "Voluptas temptation" (p. 73). Unfortunately, Barroll's interpretation tends to see the play from a purely Roman point of view, imposing upon Antony's world a simple morality structure that takes as understood the equation of Rome with Virtue and Egypt with Vice. The mythological issues of the play seem more complex than this.

In blunt terms, Hercules is mentioned four times by name in Antony and Cleopatra:

Look, prithee, Charmian,
How this Herculean Roman does become
The carriage of his chafe.

(Cleopatra I.iii.83-5)

By Hercules, I think I am i' th' right.

(Soldier III.vii.67)

'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony lov'd,
Now leaves him.

(Second Soldier IV.iii.16-7)

The shirt of Nessus is upon me; teach me,
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage;
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' th' moon,
And with those hands that grasp'd the heaviest club

Subdue my worthiest self. The witch shall die.

To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall

Under this plot. She dies for't. Eros, ho!

(Antony IV.xii.43-9)

The dramatist probably derives the Herculean association with Antony from a passage in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch: "Now it had been a speech of old time that the family of the Antonii were descended from one Anton, the son of Hercules, whereof the family took name. This opinion did Antonius seek to confirm in all his doings, not only resembling him in the likeness of his body, as we have said before, but also in the wearing of his garments. For when he would openly show himself abroad before many people, he would always wear his cassock girt down low upon his hips, with a great sword hanging by his side, and, upon that, some ill-favoured cloak."⁸ Critics have not always been in agreement as to the exact relation of Plutarch's Antony to Shakespeare's hero. T. Campbell's cautious remark that "In his portraiture of Antony there is, perhaps, a flattered likeness of the original by Plutarch"⁹ appears to be contested, in one area at least, by E.A.J. Honigmann's observation that "Long before Actium . . . Antony impresses us in scene after scene as a loser; Herculean, but still a loser; and his defeats in conversation, added by Shakespeare, distinguish him equally from Plutarch's Antonius and from other tragic heroes."¹⁰ To this we might add that Shakespeare allows his hero the luxury of voicing his ancestry on only a single occasion, and that in a moment of anger when boasting is not his intention (IV.xii.44). Compared to Plutarch's ostentatious Roman, Shakespeare's Antony, a loser perhaps, is an altogether more palatable figure.

It is true that Hercules, like Mars, was one of the most "Roman" of the Classical deities. Guillaume du Choul recounts, in Discours de la Religion des Anciens Romains Illustré (1556), that one Roman Emperor wished to call Hercules "conditeur de la cité de Rome."¹¹ And Henry Peacham posits Hercules as a type of old Roman virtue--"Virtus Romana et antiqua"¹²--who upholds the militarist and moralist qualities traditionally associated with the ancient city and its inhabitants. Antony's

And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.

(I.i.36-40)

I must from this enchanting queen break off.
Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,
My idleness doth hatch.

(I.ii.125-7)

In placing Antony in the High Roman Herculean tradition, the Egyptian Queen directly challenges his ability to "love" her in the sense that she understands the word. And whatever kind of "love" is tolerated in Rome, the Alexandrian version is clearly not acceptable. The hero's spasmodic reversions to the Roman archetype, as at I.ii.125-7 (quoted above), are ample evidence of that. Roman understanding of "Vice" and "Virtue" closely parallels the sixteenth century's interpretation of Hercules' Vice-Virtue encounter. Adriaan de Jonge's print in Les Emblemes reveals the two women celebrities in an urbanised version of the desert choice:

Deus femmes à l'entour d'Hercule l'indompté
Taschent de le tirer, chasqu'une à son coste:
L'une est pleine d'amour, l'autre est toute hideuse:
Ainsi Vertu nous tire en son chemin estroict,
Et le Vice nous pousse hors le sentier tout droit,
Pour vous faire noyer en l'eau delicieuse.¹⁴

To remove any possible doubt as to which of the two women actually represents "Vice," de Jonge portrays her hand in hand with a child Cupid. The boys who like "smiling Cupids" (II.ii.206) fan Cleopatra on her barge may represent to Enobarbus' rather Easternised aestheticism the very quintessence of Egyptian love and, in its own context, Asiatic virtue, but they acquire a significance that has quite different moral implications in Rome. We may look, for instance, at the way in which the word "lust" creeps in as a disparaging Roman synonym for the Egyptian experience, and, particularly, for Antony's flirtation with Cleopatra:

His captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust.

(Philo I.i.6-10)

at the feet sat
Caesarion, whom they call my father's son,
And all the unlawful issue that their lust
Since then hath made between them.

(Octavius III.vi.5-8)

OCTAVIA. whereon I begg'd
His pardon for return.

OCTAVIUS. Which soon he granted
Being an obstruct 'tween his lust and him.
(III.vi.59-61)

And it is significant that Octavius Caesar never once uses the term "love" in a manner that is other than socially obligatory or familial. In Rome, "love" is a trinket of rhetoric (III.ii.18), a tool to cement political alliance (III.iv.21), a fully practiced and public expression of familial kinship (III.vi.89). Always premeditated and cold, never warm and spontaneous, it is a virtue rather than an emotion--just the kind of virtue Cleopatra ridicules in her reference to Hercules.

"Herculean," in its Roman sense, quite naturally implies, as well, a military superlative, since the equation, in the Roman world, of soldierly discipline and virtue is axiomatic. Stephen Batman, in The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes (1577), writes that "Hercules apparayled in a Lions skinne, signifyeth the valiant courage of a woorthy Captayne, also the Prudencie wherewith his minde beinge furnished, he subdued his outrageous affections."¹⁵ So, to the Soldier at III.vii.67, Hercules is a metaphor for the excellence of military judgement that Antony has failed to exercise: "By Hercules, I think I am i' th' right," he says, in clear disapproval of his commander's strategy. And while the epithet "By Hercules" is not uncommon in Classical

and Elizabethan literature, the peculiarly Herculean currents that run through this play licence us to attach more importance to its usage here than we might otherwise have done. In a single line, the soldier weighs the myth paradigm against the fallible man. And we see at once that Antony's relation to the Roman Hercules has become distant and rhetorical. In fact, the whole question of Antony's Herculean military mantle must come under scrutiny. It is Octavius Caesar who first outlines the mythic stature of his fellow triumvir:

Antony,
Leave thy lascivious wassails. When thou once
Was beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
Did famine follow; whom thou fought'st against,
Though daintily brought up, with patience more
Than savages could suffer.

(I.iv.55-61)

And Pompey remarks, on hearing that Antony is every hour expected in Rome, "his soldiership / Is twice the other twain" (II.i.34-5). Yet, in III.i, Shakespeare shows us that there is something synthetic in Antony's Herculean heritage, something that devalues his myth-hero status. Antony's lieutenant Ventidius, rejecting Silius' suggestion that he should push on with his military expedition, reminds him:

I have done enough. A lower place, note well,
May make too great an act; for learn this, Silius:
Better to leave undone than by our deed
Acquire too high a fame when him we serve's away.
Caesar and Antony have ever won
More in their officer, than person.

(III.i.12-17)

Ventidius understands only too well the true nature of Roman military mythologisation. "Being" Herculean consists of something besides performing Herculean acts. It is not a pure quality of military achievement—if it were, Ventidius himself might fill the part more appropriately than Antony. The rôle of the Roman

Hercules is, in some measure at least, a political manufacture, a deification necessary to the processes of leadership. This partial fabrication is recognised by Cleopatra when Thyreus arrives and attempts to persuade her to the side of Caesar. She says, of Octavius, "He is a god, and knows / What is most right" (III.xiii.60-1). Caesar and Antony, Ventidius tells us, have ever won more in their officer, than person. The failure of Caesar to secure the trust of Cleopatra through the lobbying of his subordinates leaves him vulnerable to her deceptions and powerless to prevent her suicide. On viewing her corpse he even mistakes the manner of her death (V.ii.337) and only perceives the true cause after his minions have provided him with a string of obvious clues (V.ii.345-50). A god indeed! Similarly, as a Roman Hercules, Antony may be much less Herculean than his Classical counterpart.

Ironically, the point is made most forcefully by Antony himself at the very moment he chooses to voice his pedigree:

The shirt of Nessus is upon me; teach me,
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage;
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' th' moon,
And with those hands that grasp'd the heaviest club
Subdue my worthiest self. The witch shall die.
To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall
Under this plot. She dies for't. Eros, ho!

(IV.xii.43-9)

Eugene Waith believes that Shakespeare makes the equation of Antony and Hercules explicit at this point: "Rage is the characteristic response of the Herculean hero to an attack on his honour. Both Hercules and Antony want more than anything to recover some part of their lost honour in order to make themselves worthy of a hero's death. Both of them wish that revenge upon a perfidious woman might atone for their guilt towards an innocent woman, as well as punishing an infamous betrayal."¹⁶ Surely, though, here, as at other points in the play, Shakespeare strives to emphasise the differences between Antony and his myth-ancestor. For a start, we are inclined

to wonder just what is Antony's shirt of Nessus. Presumably, he sees it as some kind of damning treachery foisted unsuspectingly upon him by his Egyptian queen, though it is more likely that the blame for the naval débâcle lies more on his own shoulders than on hers. Reuben Brower is taking the passage too seriously when he writes of lines 43-7 (cited above): "The first lines sound like the mad Hercules of myth; the last line, like the other Hercules, the Stoic hero of self-conquest."¹⁷ Antony may cry out that the shirt of Nessus is upon him, as his great forefather could once have done, but he lacks the guiltlessness and the pathos of a dying Hercules. So, too, he may inveigh in the most mournful terms against his fate but, with an army still at his disposal, such pessimism is premature. And, as a measure of his anguish, he may ask "Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' th' moon" (Lichas was the unfortunate servant who unwittingly brought Hercules the poisoned shirt) but if blind revenge had really been his intention he could well have attacked and dismembered Cleopatra a few lines earlier. The whole tirade actually works against equation with a dying Hercules. Antony's brush with the Queen of the Nile has given him a sprinkling of the dramatic ebullience that hallmarks Cleopatra's speech and mannerism. Antony may be an unpracticed actor but he has learnt from his exotic tutor the dramatic value of myth comparison. The transmigration from Roman military to Egyptian love ethic is here marked by the dramatist in a most unexpected fashion.

Plutarch is notably harsh in his condemnation of Antony's subservience to Cleopatra, and Maurice Charney cites a passage from North's translation that could well have influenced the approach of Shakespeare to his dramatic creation: "we see in painted tablets, where Omphale secretlie stealeth away Hercules clubbe, and tooke his Lyons skinne from him. Even so Cleopatra oftentimes unarmed Antonius, and intised him to her, making him lose matters of great importance, and verie needeful jorneyes, to come and be dandled with her, about the rivers of Canobus, and Taphosiris."¹⁸ For his murder of Iphitus, the Delphic oracle bade Hercules go into slavery for a year. He was sold to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, and set to woman's work, while she

assumed his lion's skin and club.¹⁹ The association of Cupid with the Omphale-Hercules incident finds powerful expression in Renaissance iconography. The affair seems to have been taken as irrefutable proof of love's invincibility. A Carracci²⁰ drawing from Windsor shows Hercules kneeling with spindle and distaff while Omphale, grasping the usurped club, towers over him. A winged Cupid rests languidly at her feet. And Henry Peacham's print and apothegm "Vis amoris"²¹ makes the point that love conquers all. Though not specifically alluding to the Omphale incident, the emblemist Otto van Veen, in Emblemes d'Amour, claims that "pour monstere que rien ne luy pouuoit resister, d'ou print subiect Alcibiades de faire grauer sur son bouclier d'Iuoire un Cupidon, qui embrassoit un foudre."²²

Inferences of slavery and of emasculation are prominent in Antony and Cleopatra. Antony talks of "These strong Egyptian fetters" (I.ii.113) and Cleopatra confesses to "trading" in love (II.v.2), recalling, in the same act, that on one occasion "Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan" (II.v. 21-3). Shortly before the battle at Actium, Cleopatra insists that

A charge we bear i' th' war,
And, as the president of my kingdom, will
Appear there for a man. Speak not against it;
I will not stay behind.

(III.vii.16-19)

And a few lines later, Canidius laments that "our leader's led [by Cleopatra], / And we are women's men" (III.vii.69-70). Antony complains that the queen has robbed him of his sword at IV.xiv.23, and when he rails against his fortune and against her supposed treachery, he vows "The witch shall die. / To the young Roman boy she hath sold me" (IV.xii.47-8). Philo, then, may be right in calling Antony a "strumpet's fool" (I.i.13), and Octavius embarrassingly accurate in asserting that his fellow triumvir "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (I.iv.5-7). Certainly, Antony, like Hercules, is happy to fall into the grasp of his

queen.

In spite of this canon of Omphalean evidence, there are still flaws to the comparison. Foremost, Omphale is never actually mentioned by name. Assuredly, the equation of Antony's usurped "sword Philippan" with Hercules' usurped club is always attractive. But Cleopatra is not the only person to pilfer the hero's sword. Dercetas also steals it at IV.xiv.112. Further, Cleopatra never dresses in Roman armour, as Omphale dressed in Antony's lion skin. The major indication we have of a change from her imperial costume is Octavius' claim that she appeared before the Egyptian populace dressed as Isis, a deity who essenced femininity. Nor are we given the impression that Cleopatra's sway over Antony is as unqualified as Omphale's ever was over Hercules. The Roman's alleged bondage apparently precludes the return trip to Rome and the arranged marriage with Octavia, both of which are or will be against the wishes of Cleopatra. In fact, when Antony bandies about his accusations of slavery at IV.xii.13-14 ("Triple-turn'd whore! 'tis thou / Hast sold me to this novice") and at IV.xii.47-8, his point seems to be that he believes Cleopatra has sold him into slavery and not that he has been sold into her slavery as Hercules was sold into Omphale's service. An equation of Cleopatra and Omphale is further impeded by several competing images of transformation associated with figures other than the Egyptian Queen. Cleopatra styles Fulvia, and even Octavius Caesar, in the Omphalean rôle when she suggests in I.iii that they have undermined Antony's manly independence and authority. And to the Roman Enobarbus, Antony himself has become the emasculating agent. "For shame! / Transform us not to women" (IV.ii.35-6) he begs his master.

The Omphalean myth may not be the dramatic mirror of Antony's subordination that some critics have suggested.²³ It is perhaps more indicative of Shakespeare's efforts to contrast and compare the activities of his two protagonists with those of mythic counterparts. Comparison does not suggest equation, though the temptation to accept the bogus synonym of Omphale and the Nilean Queen is always strong. Only when we recognise the

fundamental incompatibility of myth and actuality do we begin to appreciate that actuality is setting its own precedent, devising its own mythology of matchless love. The Omphale flirtation is, again, a useful measure not of similarity but of difference.

The Second Soldier is, therefore, incisively to the point when he guesses that the strange noise he has heard is

the god Hercules, whom Antony lov'd,
Now leaves him.

(IV.iii.16-17)

Derek Traversi has seen this as "the sad premonition of Antony's fallen manhood . . . the dissolution of his heroic integrity."²⁴ There is another interpretation. The word "lov'd," placed centrally in the sentence, is crucial to its effect. In terms of connotation and tense, it pronounces a bondage that was once Roman and is now obsolete. It parcels up the whole gamut of Roman "love" and dispatches it with Mercurial haste. At least one critic²⁵ has alerted us to the idea that Enobarbus and Hercules both desert Antony at roughly the same time. The notion is intriguing, though the critic in question does not explain why Enobarbus and Hercules should be linked, other than to say, somewhat enigmatically, that the lieutenant "has been like a Hercules to Antony."²⁶ Nor can we say that Enobarbus, like Hercules, symbolises a Roman martial value that now forsakes his master, for an act of cowardly desertion is hardly a fully satisfactory metaphor for the loss of Roman military idealism, though it does savour of Octavius' political pragmatism. We are better advised to consider the departure of Hercules as a signal of what we might call a mythological eclipse. A martial myth has been subtly superceded by a new mythology of the senses. The hero's Roman love for Hercules is now outmoded and the departure of that god acknowledges the ascendancy of a new and a vibrant mythology--an idea expanded in the last phase of this essay. Antony himself is never quite prepared to accept that the transition has taken place. A Roman upbringing has left its indelible mark. Yet, transition there has been and the "Herculean" Roman is no longer Herculean. This is perhaps why

the dramatist is at such pains to distinguish Antony's "apotheosis" in Act Four from that of his illustrious predecessor.

Renaissance representations of Hercules' deification usually show him dignified and triumphant as he is borne aloft, still clutching his club and lion skin. Tempesta's illustration of Ovid's account reveals the hero ascending in triumph to a Jove who awaits him with open arms.²⁷ Rubens' "The Apotheosis of Hercules" shows a winged boy crowning Hercules with a laurel wreath as a horse drawn chariot bears him, in familiar garb, to the lap of the gods.²⁸ Lodovico Carrucci's painting is untypical in its perspective but traditional in its values.²⁹ Having been swept up to the seat of Jove, Hercules grasps the god of gods' hand in a powerful and moving moment of fulfilment. Our visual perspective puts us, as it were, by the hero's pyre, gazing heavenwards at the mortal who has transcended his own mortality.

As spectators to Antony's final moments, we feel much less inclined to wonderment. As many commentators have noticed, the hero experiences no visionary truths or heightened insight in death. For a horse drawn chariot, Antony has to make do with four of his own guard ("Take me up" he tells them weakly at IV.xiv.138) and for apotheosis a rather unceremonious heaving aloft, not to Jove, but to Cleopatra must suffice (IV.xv.37). No wonder he puns with such atrociously wry humour at IV.xiv.134 and 138! Most interesting of all, though, is Cleopatra's lament for her dying lover:

Had I great Juno's power,
The strong-wing'd Mercury should fetch thee up,
And set thee by Jove's side. Yet come a little.
Wishers were ever fools.

(IV.xv.34-7 Emphasis added.)

Robert G. Hunter³⁰ has suggested, in his paper "Cleopatra and the 'Oestre Junonicque,'" that there may be a reference to Juno's gadfly at III.x.10-15 but he himself concludes that the allusion is oblique and the evidence inconclusive. There is, in fact, only one other open appeal to Juno in the play and this comes during one of Antony's most abject moments of military disaster Cleopatra is, once more, the source of utterance:

EROS. Nay, gentle madam, to him! Comfort him.

IRAS. Do, most dear Queen.

CHARMIAN. Do? Why, what else?

CLEOPATRA. Let me sit down. O Juno!

ANTONY. No, no, no, no, no.

(III.xi.25-9. Emphasis added.)

Juno, it must be noted, pursued Hercules with an inveterate malice from the moment of his birth. The son of one of her husband's paramours, he spent much of his life avoiding or enduring her jealous machinations. A passage in All's Well That Ends Well strongly suggests that Shakespeare was familiar with the story:

His taken labours bid him me forgive;
I, his despitiful Juno, sent him forth
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live,
Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth.

(III.iv.12-15)

There appears to be no warrant in Plutarch for Shakespeare's use of the Classical figure of Juno in Antony and Cleopatra. Why, then, does the dramatist give his heroine Cleopatra the word "Juno" at two of the play's most anguished, and Herculean, moments? Have we here some unfortunate Hercules plagued by the spite of a jealous Juno? Apparently not, for both instances catch the Egyptian Queen in a state of most un-Juno-like helplessness. Her lover distraught and unreasonable in III.xi, she is bullied into inactivity by her battling senses of fear and duty. "Let me sit down" she implores, and then exclaims "O Juno!" clearly in recognition of her dilemma and not of some evil deed accomplished on her part. And when she wishes, in IV.xv, that she had great Juno's power to set Antony by Jove's side, the point is surely that she lacks such power, that "Wishers were ever fools." As Antony turns out to be no second Hercules, so Cleopatra emerges as no spiteful Juno maliciously assailing the fortunes of his life. In the end, the pair cannot be measured in terms of Herculean myth. It remains to be seen if the same may be said of the Mars mythology that some critics

see as central to our understanding of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra.

J.F. Danby has noted that the "play is Shakespeare's study of Mars and Venus--the presiding deities of Baroque society, painted for us again and again on the canvasses of his time."³¹ Danby does not expand on this, but Raymond B. Waddington³² picks up the idea in his paper "Antony and Cleopatra: 'What Venus did with Mars.'" Rejecting the Omphalean nuances of the play on the grounds that "Shakespeare fails to take advantage of iconographic touchstones" (p. 214) and doubting the significance of Herculean and Isis references because they tend to isolate the hero and heroine for purposes of character analysis rather than exploring the nature of the relationship between them, Waddington concludes that the play is "a romance which is designed to evoke primarily the mythical and cosmological affair of Mars and Venus" (p. 210). The departure of Hercules in IV.iii becomes, to Waddington, a symptom of Antony's heightened understanding of his relationship with Cleopatra and a symbol of his complete absorption into the Mars rôle. He goes on to argue for the play as an expression of "concordia discors," of extremities compromising--an idea implicitly suggested by the union of the god of war and the goddess of love. At the last, it is quite appropriately the child Harmony that nestles at the breast of the dying Cleopatra ("Dost thou not see my baby at my breast / That sucks the nurse asleep?" she asks at V.ii.307-8). In assessing the validity of Waddington's contentions, it will be necessary to examine closely the play's allusions to Mars.

In The Myrrour or Glasse of helth (1545), Thomas Moulton writes that Mars patronises "batayle, pryson/maryage and inimyte."³³ Though Shakespeare's war god in Antony and Cleopatra inclines to less controversial significances, we cannot deny his remarkable diversity, and it is on this point that Waddington's approach may be deemed incomplete. The first deity to whom Antony is compared, Mars, as father of Romulus, patron of Rome and the most revered of the Roman gods, is not an unlikely choice for such comparison. Polydore Vergil remarks that, "as Diodorus thinketh, the maner of warre was found out by Mars"³⁴ and Antony's

appeal to a Roman mind like Philo's rests on his unparalleled military stature. Superlative feats of endurance and courage have apparently set Antony apart from the run of ordinary men. When dalliance "blemishes" such a history, Philo concludes that the legend is lost:

Those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front.

(I.i.2-6)

H.A. Mason observes, in Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love, that "Grammatically, it is true, his eyes are merely compared to the god in armour, but the god-like fire passes back and would turn Antony at the very least into a demi-god of war."³⁵ Of significance, as well, is Philo's image of surveillance for it also tends to deify Antony by styling him in the mould of Vergil's architect of battle, and reminding us of Hotspur's awful Mars sitting on his altar as patron of all bloody carnage. Philo's Mars simile turns to metaphor as Antony is remembered as the model warrior of the battlefield, the archetypal Roman.

In the opening act, then, we can speak of two suggestive mythic identities for Antony--that of Hercules and that of Mars. Cleopatra's Roman Hercules is as Latin as Philo's Mars and both signal similar values--not simply virtue in fidelity to the Roman world, but virtue as fidelity to the Roman world. We learn, though, that the Hercules-Antony equation soon found its Roman desirability compromised. As Antony moves closer to an Egyptian love ethic and further away from the Roman ideal in his attitudes and actions, so the Roman Herculean mythology progressively distances itself from him. In Roman terms, the movement is from public virtue to private vice, from the Roman battlefield to the Egyptian boudoir, and its undesirability is rendered in the form of Omphalean nuance. As Michael Lloyd has put it: "To employ or respect the emotions is a weakness, indeed a deficiency, by the Roman code."³⁶ No wonder Philo and Demetrius lurk on the periphery of the opening scene like

spies, indignant but helpless in the face of Antony's revolt. They are the emissaries of a Roman ethos, an ethos that, by definition, not only alienates them from the Egyptian world but sets them in fierce opposition to it. Roman viewpoints, to be sure, are ever characterised by their narrowness, and Philo's use of the war god's name as an expression of absolute praise renders him prey to a humiliating counter-significance that is not slow in coming.

On the surface, Mars presents the dramatist with character traits that have at least a little in common with those of Hercules. In Classical mythology he, too, is a strange mixture of competing inclinations. Philo gives us a Mars Ultor who is unmitigably Roman and who betrays none of the traditions of adulterous lover or gentle knight, as in Chaucer's Complaint of Mars (43-4, 75, 187, and 275).³⁷ But, within four scenes, the Egyptian Mardian has painted the god romantic and lasciviously passionate:

Yet have I fierce affections, and think

What Venus did with Mars.

(I.v.17-18)

The eunuch disrobes the Roman Avenger-God ethic, mocking and mirroring in Mars' name precisely what the Romans now believe has happened to their corrupted hero. The martial connotations of the deity's name have been blatantly flouted. The soldier has been turned into a lover, and the sway of the victory can be deciphered in Mardian's phrasing--it is not what Mars did with Venus, but what Venus did with Mars. The lesson works within a well-established Renaissance tradition of love's insuperability. That tradition is often expressed in the context of the Venus-Mars entanglement. Edgar Wind,³⁸ writing without reference to Antony and Cleopatra, has listed many visual examples of this in his book Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance. One example, to which he does not allude, is of special relevance to the play. Caraglio's engraving after Rosso (ca. 1530) depicts the Graces disrobing Mars and Venus, while Cupid-like figures play with Mars' helmet and shield.³⁹ In the figure of a small winged Cupid holding Mars' sword between his legs, we have a

symbolic explanation of the eunuch Mardian's quip.

Darting, as the play does, between aspects of the Classical god's multi-faceted character, Mardian's vision of a Mars pacified is soon turned, by Enobarbus, into the promise of a Roman Mars rampant. He tells Lepidus:

If Caesar move him,
Let Antony look over Caesar's head
And speak as loud as Mars.

(II.ii.4-6)

The circumstances are almost as ironic as the eunuch's subversion of the Roman Mars theme earlier. That one so seduced by the luxurious dalliance of Egypt as Enobarbus should cast such belligerent "Romanic" demands on Antony is odd enough but that he should do so in conversation with an impotent and vulnerable Lepidus draws the scene into realms of absurdity. Needless to say, this "shouting Mars" rests rather uneasily on the lips of the Roman lieutenant and it takes only the curiosity of Agrippa to send him into a paean of Egyptian nostalgia:

She did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold, of tissue,
O'erpicturing that Venus where we see
The fancy out-work nature. On each side of her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

(II.ii.202-9)

At last the association of Cleopatra with Venus is made explicit, but not so much to emphasise their similarities as their clear differences. In Plutarch, Cleopatra is "apparelled and attired like the goddess Venus commonly drawn in picture."⁴⁰ And in Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra, offered as a possible source of Shakespeare's play by Arthur M.Z. Norman,⁴¹ the Egyptian Queen is represented as a Venus come down to earth:

Even as she was when on thy cristall streames,

Cleare Cydnos, she did shew what earth could shew;
When Asia all amaz'd in wonder, deemes
Venus from heauen was come on earth below.
Euen as she went at first to meete her loue,
So goes she now at last againe to finde him.⁴²

Unlike Plutarch and Daniel, Shakespeare does not equate Venus and Cleopatra. According to Enobarbus, the Nilean Queen actually "o'erpictures" Venus. It is difficult to know precisely how much significance to attach to a superlative like "o'erpicturing" in a play whose style is often one of hyperbole and whose sentiments frequently strain to excess. Cleopatra is, by her own admission, an ageing queen ("wrinkled deep in time" is her phrase at I.v.29). And yet, Enobarbus prefers this waning human to even the immortal Venus.⁴³ She still retains the accoutrements of a Venus in her pretty dimpled boys who fan her "like smiling Cupids," but she has transcended the Classical precedent. The Roman Enobarbus does not tell us precisely how she has done this, but we may infer from the tenor of his description that her victory is a victory of the senses--burnished thrones, purple sails so perfumed that the winds are love-sick with them, silver oars beating to the melody of flutes, multi-coloured fans that tint the cheeks they cool. Derek Traversi seems to come dangerously close to accepting a purely Roman viewpoint when he remarks that "The smiling boy-Cupids and the 'gentlewomen, like the Nereides' belong, as do their rhythmic motions, to a world of elaborate decoration in which only decadent feeling can have a place."⁴⁴ It is indeed a conscious artifice, but decadent only from a cold Roman standpoint. In Egypt, the fancy can transform the seemingly limitless permutations of Cleopatra's sensuous delights into an artifact that does, in truth, out-work nature itself. Enobarbus' poetic and easternised imagination transcends the limits of actuality, encapsulating, in marvellous images of the tangible, the sensuous essence of Cleopatra. We are, as it were, transported out of the familiar myth of Venus and relocated in a new and unrivalled mythology of the senses.

In keeping with this notion, allusions to the Venus and Mars mythology abruptly end after Enobarbus' exposition, and

it is left to Cleopatra herself to conclude the Mars development in II.v when she says, of Antony, after learning the awful truth about his marriage to Octavia:

Let him for ever go--let him not, Charmian--
Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon,
The other way's a Mars.

(II.v.115-7)

Mythology's most celebrated "two-faced" figure is Janus, often portrayed with one face smiling and the other frowning. Without using the precise figure, Cleopatra intends a similar opposition. Gerard Leigh, in The Accedence of Armorie (1591), notes that "Medusa with Neptune the god of the Sea, committed adultrie in the Temple of Minerua, who was in reuenge therof turned by the mightie godes, into an ouglie monstrous shape, and her golden haires into foule lothsome serpents, whose enuieng hir life with further reuenge, seeking to haue that monster slaine, gaue a Christiline shielde to hir liuetenant Perseus the Palladian knight."⁴⁵ Henkel and Schöne record an emblem, titled "Amoris Vmbra Invidia,"⁴⁶ in which a pretty Cupid, holding a bow and arrow, casts the shadow of a foul snake-saturated Gorgon. Cleopatra is jealous, but her insistence on the Gorgon image may perhaps go further than this. Both the cited sixteenth century examples connect the Gorgon with the more unseemly side of "love" and, as love is central to Cleopatra's consciousness, her choice of metaphor is appropriate. Maurice Charney⁴⁷ relates the Gorgon reference to the play's serpent motif, reminding us that the mythic anomaly had snaky locks. But the point is surely that Cleopatra sees the Gorgon as a total inversion of all that is desirable. By the same token, Mars here becomes desirability itself, though presumably not in any exclusive Roman sense. The wheel has come full circle. Starting as Philo's mythic tag for Antony, Mars ends as Cleopatra's mythic metaphor for the same. But the value attached to the Classical name by each is profoundly different. Philo's comparison aspires specifically to a military code, Cleopatra's usage to features and qualities that are simply un-Gorgon. Her vision of Mars

is broader, encompassing the whole spectrum of potential human excellences. In this sense, the name Mars has been modified to signify something more than the god's Classical history could suggest. As Enobarbus spoke of Cleopatra as a woman "o'erpicturing" Venus, as something more than the goddess, so Cleopatra aggrandises Antony's potential worth, not by an open superlative that styles him as greater than Mars, but by a straight comparison with the absolute monstrosity of the Gorgon that lifts the label of "Mars" into absolute and unfamiliar regions of praise. Significant, too, is Cleopatra's terminology. Antony is "painted one way like a Gorgon, / The other way's a Mars," the stress lying tellingly in the sense of imaginative artifice that, to a large extent, defines the personal mythologisation of both hero and heroine.

In an essay entitled "Cleopatra as Isis," Michael Lloyd writes: "Cleopatra's most striking qualities closely resemble those of the goddess Isis, and may have been suggested by her."⁴⁸ He proceeds to demonstrate the sources by which Shakespeare may have gleaned a knowledge of the Isis cult, and to argue for those qualities in Cleopatra's make-up that encourage an Isis identity. In particular, Lloyd makes much of her rôle as a mother and would-be wife. He writes, of Act Five, "It is here that her rôle as faithful wife and mother, the crown of the play, fully evolves. Hints at her jealousy for the name of wife are not lacking in the early play. Her concern for maternity appears as early as the public recognition of her children in the market place" (pp. 89-90). Lloyd, apparently unaware that Thomas Cooper⁴⁹ equates Hercules and Osiris in Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae (1584), concedes that he can find no textual justification for a twinning of Osiris (Isis' myth husband) and Antony.

There is no discounting the possible significance of the play's eight allusions to Isis. As principal goddess of Egypt, and wife of Osiris, Isis represented the female productive force of Nature and typified the faithful wife and devoted mother.⁵⁰ The teeming world of Egypt makes Isis a useful mythological expression of the dichotomy of Rome and Egypt. A brief and

light-hearted exchange on the subject of husbandry and cuckoldry in I.ii accounts for four of the references (I.ii.58, 62, 64 and 69) but pertinence to some of the major issues of the play endows these allusions with added weight. In establishing the link between Isis and overt sexuality, the attendants prepare the way for the Queen's exclamation at I.v:

By Isis, I will give thee bloody teeth
If thou with Caesar paragon again
My man of men.

(lines 70-2)

Assessing Cleopatra's sincerity is, admittedly, one of the great problems of the play. But the rejection of Caesar in the confidence of her attendant, and the reassertion of an open fidelity that, despite uneasy moments, follows Antony to the grave suggest some kind of Isis-like fibre.

In III.iii, the name of the goddess crops up twice, at lines 15 and 42. On both occasions, Charmian is the speaker but the references occur in the midst of Cleopatra's remonstrances over an unfaithful Antony who has underhandedly married another in Rome. Lloyd's Isis-Cleopatra equation might seem persuasive, but objections must be made. Isis may have represented marital and maternal devotion, but when Cleopatra, at V.ii.285, thinks of herself as Antony's husband ("Husband, I come") and, at V.ii.307, looks on the asp as "my baby at my breast," we are hardly talking about life-giving forces. The husband she talks of is dead and the baby she clutches at her breast is a figure of death and not of physical life. The whole idea of the marriage union is subverted and inverted to portray something completely opposite to Isis' representation of the female productive force of Nature. It is ultimately a love that matters to Cleopatra and not a life. The close allegiance of Cupid and Death is a popular emblem book motif. The link may be traced back at least to Andrea Alciati's Emblematum Libellus (1535) in which, after an alehouse session together, Death and Cupid wake in the morning and mistakenly mix their arrows.⁵¹ Katherine Vance MacMullen, in her study of the play's death imagery, has claimed that "The idea of the marriage with Death is one of the most vivid and

terrifying subjects of the iconographical tradition."⁵² She does not cite examples in support of this contention and the emphasis on terror is, if anything, a little overstated. The marriage with Death can, and often does, find sympathetic expression within the iconographical tradition of the danse macabre. We may look, for instance, to an emblem referred to in the Henry V chapter. A print, by de Bry,⁵³ shows Death as a blushing bride, skeletal and coy, and may be pertinent to Antony's promise that

I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed.

(IV.xiv.99-101)

The young fleshed man who approaches his Death-bride in de Bry's emblem might almost be some Antony who, despising one world, strives to perpetuate his love in another. Cleopatra touches on a similar idea when she tells us that "The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch, / Which hurts and is desir'd" (V.ii.293-4). In perpetrating her own death, Cleopatra consigns her children to the dreadful fate that awaits them at the hands of Octavius. He makes the matter very clear to her:

but if you seek
To lay on me a cruelty by taking
Antony's course, you shall bereave yourself
Of my good purposes, and put your children
To that destruction which I'll guard them from,
If thereon you rely.

(V.ii.127-32. Emphasis added.)

History records that one of the children was put to death.⁵⁴ And, in the play, there is no evidence to suggest that Octavius' threat is one to be taken lightly. Cleopatra's suicide, with its inevitably unfortunate consequences for her children, is hardly the action of a devoted mother.

The Isis myth is important to Shakespeare as a parallel to the myth Cleopatra and Antony fashion for themselves in the course of the play. Octavius Caesar vilifies the couple for

the way they were "publicly enthron'd" (III.vi.5) in the "public eye". (III.vi.11):

She
In th' habiliments of the goddess Isis
That day appear'd; and oft before gave audience,
As 'tis reported, so.

(III.vi.16-19)

Again, the acting motif comes to the fore. Cleopatra may have appeared in the costume of Isis but it is merely a part she plays, and a part that is significant. Like Isis, but not as Isis, she takes on a universal meaning. The Egyptian goddess, through successive identification with Juno, Io, Aphrodite and Astarte, became the embodiment of the universal Goddess. The case for Cleopatra's "universality" may not be taken as far as Swinburne has done: "To sum up Shakespeare has elsewhere given us in ideal incarnation the perfect mother, the perfect wife, the perfect daughter, the perfect mistress, or the perfect maiden: here only once for all he has given us the perfect and everlasting woman."⁵⁵ But, by presenting themselves to the people, the hero and the heroine have publicly dramatised their own mythology of love, embracing not simply a court or a place of pomp, but the whole world itself. They have become, to use Henry V's words, "the makers of manners" (V.ii.268-9), the popular and universal performers on the popular and universal stage. And that stage, it seems, is set for their deification.

At this point, we should perhaps consolidate the argument. Although one critic⁵⁶ has seen the tensions of the play in terms of a Christian framework, it seems reasonable to suggest that the key mythologies Shakespeare uses to demonstrate the great perplexities of choice are all Classical--Hercules, Omphale, Juno, Mars, Venus. In Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare adapts the two-way mechanism of mythology/anti-mythology worked out in the History plays. Hercules is, on the one hand, a moral and military paradigm and, on the other, an effeminate slave. Mars is both a soldier archetype and an emasculated debauchee. These, at least, are Roman moulds into which the individual is slotted approvingly or disapprovingly as the case requires.

Geographically and ideologically distanced from Rome, Egypt offers, to those who experience its liberalities, the chance to adjust Roman mythologies. And so, Enobarbus speaks of a Cleopatra who exceeds the bounds of Classical myth, "o'erpicturing that Venus" (II.ii.204). And Cleopatra, using the "two-way" imagistic mechanism in variation, devises a Mars who excels his Roman namesake: "Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, / The other way's a Mars" (II.v.116-17). This, though, does not mark the periphery of the play's mythological exploration. Adjustment is not Shakespeare's ultimate intention in regard to Classical myth--abandonment is his objective. The experience of an English mythology that turns sour in Henry V, after a protracted development from the opening play of the Yorkist Tetralogy, appears to have left Shakespeare in some doubt that the fulfilment of a militarist myth, expressed in whatever terms, can be a valid expression of human triumph. Written many years after the first performance of Henry V, this new play based on the lives of Antony and Cleopatra afforded Shakespeare perhaps his first real opportunity to re-examine, at some length, the mythology of military heroism and to offer a meaningful and enduring alternative. Shakespeare's deliberate discreditation of Classical material in Antony and Cleopatra culminates in the final act where no overt Classical allusions evidence themselves. This is in keeping with the work's broader movement away from the illusion of close equation with a given myth towards the suggestion that, in the world of Antony and Cleopatra, we have a new myth emerging, a myth whose participants are distinguished by qualities other than military prowess or moral righteousness.

The idea that the affections existing between these two protagonists are both new and unparalleled is evoked with some force in the first act of the play:

CLEO. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

ANT. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

(I.i.16-17)

In the same scene, Antony exclaims that he and his lover "stand up peerless" in the world:

The nobleness of life
Is to do thus [embracing], when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.

(Antony I.i.36-40)

And, two scenes later, the queen chides

When you sued staying,
Then was the time for words. No going then!
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven.

(Cleopatra I.iii.33-7)

As the drama unfolds, we become increasingly aware that such sentiments, as powerful and compelling as they may be, are, to some extent, indebted to the imagination for their survival. Cleopatra is an ageing and devious queen, Antony an uneasy and middle-aged soldier. Neither wholly trusts the other. In rhetorical flights of the imagination, their love is perfection itself, in reality it is flawed with doubts. Enobarbus' poetic description of Cleopatra in her barge on the Cydnus (II.ii) exemplifies this mechanism of fantasy. In his account, he manufactures a sensual and aesthetic utopia whose only viable domain is the mind and the painted word. And when he says of Cleopatra's tears "This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a show'r of rain as well as Jove" (I.ii.145-6), his imagination mythologises where actuality could not.

With words, Cleopatra is able to lift the stature of warring Antony into realms of imagined excellences. When he has left for Rome, Cleopatra turns him into the very stuff of myth:

O Charmian,
Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he or sits he?
Or does he walk? or is he on his horse?
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!
Do bravely, horse; for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st?
The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm

And burgonet of men.

(I.v.18-24)

In his death, the world is devalued: "this world did equal theirs [the Gods] / Till they had stol'n our jewel" (IV.xv.77-8). In Cleopatra's remembrance, Antony is the quintessence not simply of a military excellence but of all those exemplary qualities that compose a perfection of humanity:

His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
Crested the world. His voice was propertied
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like: they show'd his back above
The element they liv'd in. In his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

(V.ii.82-92)

Colossal, supreme, eloquent, thunderous, bountiful, endowed with every human excellence--Cleopatra turns Antony into a god. And, though distanced by the earthliness from the sphere of Classical deity, Antony is in no way deprived of magnificent properties or accoutrements. Cleopatra commits his memory to a world of half-realities and dream. There was such a man as Antony and he was an exceptional man. But the agency of the dream turns the remarkable into the immortal. The splendid, though fallible, hero is transformed into a very monument, bestriding the oceans, commanding the world, surpassing all in achievement and magnanimity. Cleopatra tells Dolabella: "I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony" (V.ii.76), asks him "Think you there was or might be such a man / As this I dreamt of?" (V.ii.93-4) and, at last, censures the Roman messenger for denying the human myth ("Gentle madam, no" at V.ii.94) in a eulogy that considers the splendour of Antony's life in terms of the imagination and fancy:

You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.
 But if there be nor ever were one such,
 It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff
 To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t' imagine
 An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
 Condemning shadows quite.

(V.ii.95-100)

That Antony existed there can be no argument. It is in the perception of that existence, in the verbal and mental renewal of an earthly majesty, that the imagination and fancy vie for dominion. In Roman terms, we might guess, Cleopatra's vision of her Antony is fanciful. But in Egypt, where the bounds of "truth" extend beyond the literal (as in Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra in II.ii), the imagination finds sanction and validity in an embellished recollection of greatness. Dolabella, a stranger to the Egyptian world, can understand none of this. But in making the imagination, the Egyptian imagination, the vehicle of recollection, Cleopatra suggests that the memory of Antony might win a final victory against the slanders of the Roman world:

yet t' imagine

An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
 Condemning shadows quite.

As a Roman, Antony has failed to live up to the Roman militarist myth--the myth of Hercules and Mars--that the eternal city would build around its most favoured sons. For all his praise at the end of the play, Octavius Caesar pointedly avoids celebrating Antony as a soldier. If we look for a final myth, Cleopatra seems to be telling us, we must seek it in an actuality of love and human worth painted and thereby mythologised in the Egyptian imagination.

It is both strange and sad that when Mardian brings news of Cleopatra's death, Antony makes no effort to build out of her history a new and personal myth of miraculous proportions. He describes prolonged life as torture (IV.xiv.46) and admires her courage (IV.xiv.60). But there is no aggrandisement of

the qualities that compounded her earthly existence, no eulogy of mythic dimensions, no extravagant expression of his love for her. Antony does not seem aware of the development from the mythologisation of his life into typical Roman modes, to a myth that is unprecedented and free of the shackles of Classical mythology. His real concerns latterly, as formerly (despite apparently hollow protestations in I.i), are with his Roman myth status. In his darkest moments, he can sink so low as to accuse Cleopatra of sullyng his very ancestry: "Have I my pillow left unpress'd in Rome, / Forborne the getting of a lawful race" (III.xiii.106-7). But in his most splendid moments, he can only rise to the vain promise of a Martian-type militarist superlative:

If from the field I shall return once more
To kiss these lips, I will appear in blood.
I and my sword will earn our chronicle.

(III.xiii.173-5. Emphasis added.)

If there is a union in the closing acts, it is not a union of mythic understanding, for while Cleopatra shows a willingness to mythologise Antony and her love for him, Antony does not appear to be conscious of a present movement towards the personal love-myth. It is only in the afterworld, where they will make the ghosts gaze (IV.xiv.52) and where "Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops, / And all the haunt be ours" (IV.xiv.53-4), that he considers their love will be able to achieve mythic and new dimensions.⁵⁷ We can assume he believes the present has fallen short of this. Since the love-myth relies for its dramatic existence on an imagination openly and rhetorically acknowledged, Antony's failure to offer a genuine reciprocation of Cleopatra's proffered myth-harmony in the final stages of the play leaves us short of what Raymond Waddington would term the play's "concordia discors." The full act that separates the deaths of the lovers to some degree may be seen as a temporal and a visual metaphor for this disunity.

The manipulation of mythological figures in Antony and Cleopatra suggests a movement away from a view of a world

structured purely in terms of traditional Classical mythology. Such a view reflects a Roman perspective, and, accordingly, its mythological figures assume "two-way" significances of virtue and vice, of approval and disapproval, in terms of Rome's ideal militarist values. The process of bogus or synthetic Roman mythologisation, an acceptable and even necessary function of political life in Julius Caesar, comes under increasingly pejorative scrutiny in Antony and Cleopatra. This is perhaps because the earlier play does not offer, and does not intend to offer, any viable alternative to the mythological norms of its Roman setting. Antony and Cleopatra is quite different. Here, a love myth emerges to challenge the Roman military ethos. It is perhaps a tenuous myth, and Antony's understanding of it is limited, but, in its emphasis on the worth of the human bond and interpersonal obligations, it expresses an ideal that Coriolanus will link with the military spirit of Rome itself.

Antony and Cleopatra

Notes

¹ William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (C.H. Reynell, for R. Hunter, 1817), p. 95.

² Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 396.

³ "Manhood and Valour in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," ELH, 17 (1950), p. 271.

⁴ Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946-1947), I, 371. The prefaces were written over a period of some twenty years for the Players' Shakespeare.

⁵ Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961).

⁶ The Herculean Hero (Chatto & Windus, 1962), pp. 112-21. Waith (pp. 39-59) discusses, at some length, Renaissance attitudes to and interpretations of the Hercules myth.

⁷ "Enobarbus' Description of Cleopatra," Texas Studies in English, 37 (1958), 61-78.

⁸ This quotation comes from "The Life of Marcus Antonius" in T.J.B. Spencer's edition of Shakespeare's Plutarch (1964; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), p. 177. Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's work appeared in 1579.

⁹ Campbell is quoted in A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Tragedie of Anthonie, and Cleopatra, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1907), p. 478.

¹⁰ Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies (Macmillan Press, 1976), p. 153.

¹¹ Discours de la Religion des Anciens Romains Illustré (1556; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.,

1976), p. 182.

¹² Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroical Devices (Wa. Dight, 1612), p. 36.

¹³ For Xenophon's account of Hercules' choice between the damsels of Vice and Virtue, see his Memorabilia (II.i.21-32) in the Loeb Classical Library edition of Xenophon, IV (1923; rpt. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), translated by E.C. Marchant.

¹⁴ Les Emblemes, translated into French by Jacques Grévin (Anvers: De l'imprimerie de Christophe Plantin, 1567), p. 48.

¹⁵ The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes (1577; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), pp. 12^r-12^v.

¹⁶ Waith, The Herculean Hero, pp. 119-20.

¹⁷ Hero & Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 333.

¹⁸ Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 130. The passage does not appear in T.J.B. Spencer's edition.

¹⁹ The story of Hercules' servitude at the hands of Omphale is told in Apollodorus' Bibliotheca, a book that recalls the actions and genealogies of the gods and the ancient heroes. See Richard Wagner's edition of Apollodori Bibliotheca (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), II, 127 foll. This is the first volume in the series Mythographi Graeci.

²⁰ R. Wittkower refers to this print as being that of Annibale Carracci, Cat. No. 390 (Plate 50) in his work The Drawings of the Carracci in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle (The Phaidon Press Ltd., 1952), p. 152.

²¹ Peacham, Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroical Devices, p. 95.

²² Emblemes d'Amour. Illustrez D'une Explication en prose fort facile pour entendre le sens moral de chaque Embleme (Paris?: n.p., 16--), n. pag. Mario Praz lists this edition in Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery, p. 525.

²³ For example, Eugene Waith, The Herculean Hero, p. 113; and Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, who, referring to passages in Antony and Cleopatra (II.ii.232-33 and II.v.22-23), argues that there "is perhaps an allusion to Hercules' enslavement by Omphale here, for Omphale forced Hercules to wear her clothes, while she dressed in his lion-skin and carried his club. The identification is very specifically indicated in the 'Comparison' that follows the life of Antony in North's Plutarch . . . This is the sort of effemination that Cleopatra has inflicted on Antony, and it is no wonder that when Cleopatra enters in I.ii, Enobarbus says sardonically: 'Hush! Here comes Antony' (I.ii.83)" (p. 130).

²⁴ Shakespeare: The Roman Plays (Hollis & Carter, 1963), p. 159.

²⁵ Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 138.

²⁶ Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 138.

²⁷ Antonio Tempesta, Metamorphoseon Sive Transformationvm Ovidianarvm (1606; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), plate 85.

²⁸ "The Apotheosis of Hercules," Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Cat. No. 195). The work is listed in Julius S. Held's catalogue The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens, II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

²⁹ The painting, possibly the work of Annibale Carracci (1560-1609), is described (p. 31) and reproduced (fig. 13) in The Farnese Gallery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) by John Rupert Martin.

³⁰ "Cleopatra and the 'Oestre Junonicque,'" Shakespeare Studies, 5 (1969), p. 237: "It would seem that there is a case to be made for the series of equations: Cleopatra = a cow in June = Io = Isis = Cleopatra."

³¹ Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher (Faber and Faber, 1952), pp. 150-1.

³² "Antony and Cleopatra: 'What Venus did with Mars,'"

Shakespeare Studies, 2 (1966), 210-227.

33 The Myrrour or Glasse of helth necessary and nedefull for euery person to loke in that wyll kepe theyr body from the sekene of the Pestylence (W. Myddleton, 1545), sig. C3^r.

34 An Abridgemet of the notable worke of Polidore Vergile conteygnyng the deuisers and first finders out as well of Artes, Ministeries, Feactes & ciuill ordinaunces, as of Rites, & Ceremonies, commonly vsed in the churche: and the originall beginnyng of the same, compended by Thomas Langley (R. Grafton, 1546), fol. 48^r. Pollard and Redgrave, in A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland (1475-1640), refer to Vergil as Polydorus Vergilius.

35 Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love (Chatto & Windus, 1970), p. 232.

36 "The Roman Tongue," Shakespeare Quarterly, 10 (1959), p. 463.

37 The text used is that in F.N. Robinson's edition of The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 529-32.

38 See Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 89-96. Wind's book was first published in 1958.

39 Caraglio's engraving is recorded by Adam Bartsch in Le Peintre Graveur, Nouvelle Edition (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1867), XV, "Sujets De Mythologie" No. 15 on p. 74.

40 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 201.

41 "Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra and Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly, 9 (1958), 11-18.

42 Lines 1477-82. Norman, "Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra and Antony and Cleopatra," quotes this passage on pp. 16-17.

43 The notion of one beauty outdoing another is peculiarly pertinent here. At the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (Antony exclaims to Cleopatra "Away, my Thetis" at III.vii.60), Eris or Strife threw on the floor a golden apple on which was inscribed "For the fairest." The apple was claimed by Juno, Minerva and

Venus--and Paris was called in to resolve the argument. See H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology, 6th ed. (1958; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 106.

44 Traversi, Shakespeare: The Roman Plays, p. 115.

45 The Accedence of Armorie (1562, first publ.; R. Tottel, 1591), fol. 16^v. Pollard and Redgrave, A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland (1475-1640), refer to the author as Gerard Legh.

46 Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, Emblemata: Handbuch Zur Sinnbildkunst Des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), column 1572.

47 Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 99.

48 "Cleopatra as Isis," Shakespeare Survey, 12 (1959), p. 88.

49 Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae tam accurate congestus, vt nihil penè in eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latinè complectatur amplissimus Stephani Thesaurus, vel Anglicè, toties aucta Eliotae Bibliotheca (1565, first publ.; John Torkington, 1584), sig. 7G1^r.

50 For an account of the Isis myth see J. Lemprière, Lempriere's Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors rev. F.A. Wright (1949; rpt. London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), "Isis." The dictionary first appeared in 1788.

51 Emblematvm Libellvs (1534, first publ.; Parisiis: Ex officiana Christiani Wecheli, sub scuto Basiliensi, in uico Iacobaeo, 1535), p. 70.

52 "Death Imagery in Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly, 14 (1963), p. 400.

53 Johann Theodor de Bry, Emblemata (Inpressum Francoforti ad Moenum, 1593), n.pag.

54 In Shakespeare's Plutarch, ed. T.J.B. Spencer, we read "For Cleopatra's children, they were very honourably kept, with their governors and train that waited on them. But, for Caesarion, who was said to be Julius Caesar's son, his mother Cleopatra had

sent him unto the Indians through Ethiopia, with a great sum of money. But one of his governors also called Rhodon, even such another as Theodorus, persuaded him to return into his country, and told him that Caesar sent for him to give him his mother's kingdom. So, as Caesar was determining with himself what he should do, Arrius said unto him:

'Too many Caesars is not good,'

alluding unto a certain verse of Homer that saith:

'Too many lords doth not well.'

Therefore Caesar did put Caesarion to death, after the death of his mother Cleopatra" (p. 285).

⁵⁵ A.C. Swinburne, A Study of Shakespeare (Chatto & Windus, 1880), p. 188.

⁵⁶ Dolora G. Cunningham, in her paper "The Characterization of Shakespeare's Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly, 6 (1955), writes that "the character of the heroine is complicated by the fact that in the end she has to choose between life as she has lived it and the final change of death. That is, she has to choose between sin and virtue, this world and eternity. It is, therefore, the traditional scheme of Christian ethics which provides the standards of realism for judging the character of Cleopatra and the entire dramatic action" (p. 17).

⁵⁷ Donna B. Hamilton, in "Antony and Cleopatra and the Tradition of Noble Lovers," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), 245-251, has demonstrated that Dido and Aeneas enjoyed a high reputation as noble lovers in Shakespeare's day.

Coriolanus

E.A.J. Honigmann, in Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies, writes that "Coriolanus, though also associated with other gods, is seen throughout the play as a Jupiter-figure."¹ The evidence Honigmann provides is persuasive. Not only does Coriolanus swear "By Jupiter" (I.ix.90) and "By Jove" (III.i.86 and 107), but he has also a voice like thunder (I.iv.60; I.vi.25), and the nobles bow to him "As to Jove's statue" (II.i.256). Further, a number of characters mention Jupiter when talking of Marcius--Virgilia at I.iii.37, Menenius at II.i.98, and the commander of the Volscians, Tullus Aufidius, at IV.v.103-6. Eugene Waith,² in The Herculean Hero, sees in Coriolanus a variation on the Herculean theme. Pointing to Menenius' comparison of Marcius to Hercules at IV.vi.100-101 ("As Hercules / Did shake down mellow fruit"), and noting the various Herculean characteristics of the Roman hero, Waith concludes that Marcius "will not 'join flames with Hercules'. What the last scene of the play affirms with compelling force is the value of what the world is losing in the death of the hero. . . . Instead of the comfort of an apotheosis we are given the tragic fact of irremediable loss" (p. 141).

Though I.R. Browning, in an article in Essays in Criticism (1955), calls Coriolanus "the foremost of Mars' followers,"³ few critics have been prepared to pursue this particular mythic line. E.A.J. Honigmann⁴ acknowledges its importance in a note to his Jupiter discussion. Eugene Waith ignores it entirely. This is surprising for three reasons. Firstly, the play's five explicit allusions to the god of war occur at significant points in Coriolanus' personal saga. He, himself, invokes the aid of the deity (I.iv.10) when we first meet him in a war situation; when Marcius makes his presence known in the city of the enemy Volscians, Aufidius describes him as a "Mars" (IV.v.118); the Third Servingman calls upon a Mars simile (IV.v.192) to describe the Roman general's deification in the Volscian camp; on seeing

his son in the final act, Coriolanus appeals to the god of soldiers (V.iii.70); and Aufidius reviles his one-time ally's cry to Mars (V.vi.100) in the assassination scene. Secondly, Shakespeare's association of Mars and Coriolanus has no precedent in Plutarch's account of "The Life of Martius Coriolanus"⁵—a point that, of itself, ought to arouse our interest. Thirdly, a superlative Roman soldier is surely better served by comparison to Mars than to any other Classical god. While Shakespeare is able to draw a distinction in desirability between the English Mars and the Roman Mars in Henry IV and Henry V, there can be no doubt that, in the setting of Classical Rome, Classical Mars must reign supreme. As evidence of this we need look no further than Suetonius who records, in The Lives of the Caesars, that Augustus "had made a vow to build the temple of Mars in the war of Philippi, which he undertook to avenge his father; accordingly he decreed that in it the senate should consider wars and claims for triumphs, from it those who were on their way to the provinces with military commands should be escorted, and to it victors on their return should bear the tokens of their triumphs."⁶ And while Hercules and Jupiter can be, and are, associated with the sphere of warfare, at least two military writers of Shakespeare's era show a clear preference for Mars. Barnaby Rich, in Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession (1581), recalls how, as a young prospective soldier, he vowed himself "onely vnto Mars,"⁷ and how experience has now taught him that "to bee of Mars his crewe, there is nothyng but paine, trauaill, tormoill, disquiet, colde, hunger, thirste, penurie, badde lodging, worse fare, vnquiet slepe, with a number of other calameties."⁸ Robert Barret, in The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres (1598), addresses his book to those, his countrymen, who "haue not, as yet, entred within the boundes of Mars his bloody field."⁹ To Barret, the uninitiated soldier is one who has "not yet entred commons in Mars his Campe,"¹⁰ and who has "not yet marched vnder Mars his Colours."¹¹ In Coriolanus, a play centred around the mighty city renowned as the seat of Mars, Shakespeare has in both the name and the saga of the soldier Marcius the perfect opportunity to develop a Mars-based mythology.

Caius Marcius is the first person in Coriolanus to use the name Mars. He does so as he and Titus Lartius prepare to do battle with the Volscian host outside Corioli. Some distance away, Cominius commands another Roman force and he and his army face a second Volscian detachment. Against this backdrop of impending carnage, Marcius speaks:

MARCIUS. How far off lie these armies?

MESSENGER. Within this mile and half.

MARCIUS. Then shall we hear their 'larum, and they ours.

Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work,
That we with smoking swords may march from hence
To help our fielded friends! Come, blow thy blast.

(I.iv.8-12. Emphasis added.)

To Marcius, Mars is here the familiar Roman "God of battaile,"¹² as Thomas Cooper calls him--the supreme moderator of war on earth whose guiding patronage is the hope of any mortal soldier. In appealing to the deity, Marcius apparently upholds the tradition of a hierarchy of power that views as separate, though by no means unconnected, the world of the gods and the world of mortals. Julius Caesar, in the earlier play, preserved a distinction of this sort, but with the provision that his own existence fell within the domain of the immortals. Coriolanus here betrays no such aspiration, and seems to accept a mortal rôle within the customary hierarchy. Not only does he appeal to a god, but he also punctuates his supplication with a rather submissive "I prithee" (line 10). Such humility perhaps lends support to those like Maurice Charney¹³ and William Bowden¹⁴ who argue that Coriolanus' valour is rooted more in virtue than ambition. And it certainly endorses Jay L. Halio's observation that, in the opening stages of the play, Marcius "has a very real sense of his subordination to the gods."¹⁵ Yet, as the evidence against Coriolanus accumulates, a quite different picture appears to emerge:

Being mov'd, he will not spare to gird the gods.

(Brutus I.i.254)

You speak o' th' people

As if you were a god, to punish; not
A man of their infirmity.

(Brutus to Marcius III.i.80-2)

MENENIUS. Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS. For them! I cannot do it to the gods;
Must I then do't to them?

(III.ii.37-9)

He is their god; he leads them like a thing
Made by some other deity than Nature,
That shapes man better

(Cominius IV.vi.91-3)

Coriolanus is consistently revealed to the audience as a man who is unable or unwilling to accept subordination within any social or military framework, save the mother-son relationship he has with Volumnia. The assault on the city of Corioli, from which the first Mars allusion derives, is testimony to this. At the opening of I.iv, Marcius and his co-commander Titus Lartius are engaged in affable conversation. "Co-commander" because it is made reasonably clear at I.ii.12-15 and I.iii.98-101 that this particular Roman division is under their joint command. But, as soon as the battle begins, Marcius assumes almost total control, reducing the authority of his fellow officer to a single order—"Ladders, ho!" (I.iv.22). Marcius, as the architect of the battle, stands supreme and isolated.¹⁶ Curiously, his language at times tends to veil this natural inclination towards isolation. In the state of war, Coriolanus perceives a bizarre substitute for a conventional social world. So it is that a man who is curt even to his allies in the streets of Rome, speaks of a desire to assist his "fielded friends" (I.iv.12) before the gates of Corioli. Present, as well, are words like "we," "ours," "us"—words that, in their suggestion of society and fellowship, contrast so sharply with the sense of alienation Marcius' very name evokes in the three preceding civil scenes. Sadly, such unity is illusory. The extraordinary qualities of the hero's military exploits actually serve as a further isolating factor, pulling him beyond the ranks of ordinary

humanity and endowing him with the peerless excellence of a god. It is the contention of this chapter that the name of the god Mars becomes a "two-way" image, reflecting both Marcius' inability to comply with the norms of common mortality, and his inescapable fidelity to a Roman military ethos. Though an overt Mars-Coriolanus equation is delayed until IV.v.118, ("Why, thou Mars" exclaims Aufidius), Shakespeare provides us with mythological clues long before this.

It was noted in the chapter on the Henry IV plays that some Classical literature styles Mars as a rash and zealous warrior who is frequently compromised by his own enthusiasm. Homer's Iliad describes him as "the god who never had his fill of war,"¹⁷ and Valerius Flaccus conveys something of the deity's usual fervidness when, in Argonautica, he has Mars spur the warring parties into battle: "From his chariot on high Mars fiercely cries: 'The foe, the foe! on with you! forward to the fray! the foe draws nigh!' and therewith he sends here the Colchians, there Perses rushing into the plain."¹⁸ Mars, as a participating warrior, is no less inclined to hasty military engagements. His wounding at the hands of Diomedes illustrates this well.¹⁹ The war god's blind valour, while admirable in some ways, can never quite evade the accusation of foolishness. Coriolanus must face the same charge. At one point he takes on the entire city of Corioli (a soldier calls it "Fool-hardiness" at I.iv.46), at another he offers to do battle with the whole plebeian population (Cominius brands it "foolery" at III.i.246). In his defence of Coriolanus, Dean Frye argues that the "patricians express no adverse judgments on Coriolanus except that he is imprudent."²⁰ Yet, for a soldier, the judgement of imprudence is censure enough, and Paul A. Jorgensen is surely right to stress the fact that, while there is praise for Coriolanus as an ardent fighter, "Concerning wise leadership, the eulogies are silent."²¹ In Plutarch's original, Coriolanus does not enter the city of Corioli alone: "But he looking about him, and seeing he was entered the city with very few men to help him . . . did things then, as it is written, wonderful and incredible."²² And Plutarch's protagonist does not challenge the plebeian

populace to a sword fight--we are told merely that "Martius stoutly withstood"²³ the officers sent to arrest him. The dramatist appears to have made a conscious effort to underscore Marcius' Mars-like "imprudence" in both incidents. The Classical war god and Coriolanus share, as well, an insatiable love of war. Homer has Zeus declare to Mars: "There is nothing you enjoy so much as quarrelling and fighting; which is why I hate you more than any god on Olympus."²⁴ Valerius Flaccus, comparing the exploits of Mars and Jason, writes that "Even as Mars' chariot leaps down from the stars into the midst of the Bistones, when high hearts and the clamour and the bloodthirsty trumpets have filled the god with joy, even so swiftly does he [Jason] madly seize upon the battle-ground; the whole force of the Achaeans follows him"²⁵ (emphasis added). So, too, Coriolanus disdains peace. As with young Harry Hotspur, the prospect of war thrills him, and when he hears of the Volscian mobilisation, he rejoices:

MESSENGER. The news is, sir, the Volsces are in arms.

MARCIUS. I am glad on't; then we shall ha' means to vent
Our musty superfluity.

(I.i.222-4)

Again without sanction from Plutarch, these lines convey not only Coriolanus' Martian desire for combat, but also his peculiar conception of war as a panacea for society's "ills."

Of course, Death and the bloody world of Mars are inseparable. Richard Linche,²⁶ in his truncated translation (1599) of Vincenzo Cartari's Le imagini de i dei gli antichi (1556), offers us a grotesque description of the figure of Death in the palace of Mars. Edward Hodnett,²⁷ in English Woodcuts: 1480-1535, lists several examples of the Mars-Death association. And, in Coriolanus, Marcius is the first to forward himself as a Death figure:

Would the nobility lay aside their ruth
And let me use my sword, I'd make a quarry
With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high
As I could pick my lance.

(I.i.195-8)

It is, though, Volumnia--his mentor and inspiration--who states, more explicitly, his rôle as the grim reaper, and makes us "think of Death and his scythe,"²⁸ as E.A.J. Honigmann puts it:

His bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,
Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
Or all or lose his hire.

(I.iii.34-7)

Norman Rabkin sees these lines as a picture of "a terrifying automatic warrior, the inhuman mechanism of destruction,"²⁹ and the sense of the deathly automaton is reinforced an act later when Cominius quakes:

His sword, death's stamp,
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was tim'd with dying cries.

(II.ii.105-8)

In Cominius' vision of Coriolanus as "a thing of blood" there is surely an echo of Hotspur's Classical Mars who sits on his altar, "Up to the ears in blood" (1 Henry IV IV.i.117), and presides over the soldier's fate.³⁰

Coriolanus' angry departure from Rome ("I banish you" he shouts to the plebeians at III.iii.125) appears to compromise the equation of Marcius and Mars. After all, Mars is the patron deity of Rome. William Fulbecke, in An historicall collection of the continuall factions of the Romans and Italians, a work first published in 1601, talks of Rome as "the famous citie of Europe, the mother and nurce of worthie Senators, the miracle of nations, the epitomie of the world, the kingdome of Mars, and the seuenheaded soueraigne of many prouinces"³¹ (emphasis added). The god Mars and the defence of Rome are inextricably linked. It was customary, as J. Lemprière tells us, for a consul about to embark on a military expedition to visit the war god's temple in Rome, where, after prayer, he shook the spear of Mars, exclaiming "Mars vigila! god of war, watch over the safety of this city."³² Denied the consulship, and banished from the

city that he, of all living Romans, has done most to protect, Coriolanus pledges himself to the annihilation of the Rome he had once sworn to defend. With this change in mind, we can perhaps decipher two coherent and opposing military mythologies. In the first, the "Roman" mythology, Marcius stands as the archetypal defender of Rome and its values. That Shakespeare intends us to understand the archetypal nature of this function, we may infer from the persistent suggestions of a Marcius-Mars identification. The second mythology represents an inversion of those qualities that the "Roman" mythology holds dear. In this new myth, Coriolanus abdicates his Martian responsibility as the defender and military exemplar of Rome. He commits himself, instead, to the destruction of Rome, and to the severance or suppression of those fidelities, domestic or otherwise, that once tied him to the city of his birth. Taking our cue from the myth schemata proposed for the English History plays, we can perhaps employ the term "anti-mythology" to describe this inverted design.

• It is a curious, and significant, feature of the play's mythological development that the metaphorical link of Mars and Coriolanus, anticipated for so long in the Roman scenes, is at last given open expression by a non-Roman:

Why, thou Mars, I tell thee
We have a power on foot, and I had purpose
Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn,
Or lose mine arm for't. Thou hast beat me out
Twelve several times, and I have nightly since
Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me--
We have been down together in my sleep,
Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat--
And wak'd half dead with nothing.

(Aufidius IV.v.118-26)

Momentarily enthused by the arrival of his arch-enemy, Aufidius is at pains to follow up the Mars reference with vocabulary and ideas that both substantiate and consolidate the equation with a god. There is something more than human, something monumental,

in Aufidius' "hew" (line 120), and that sculptural sense is sustained in the phrase that follows. The Volscian general was once determined to sever "thy target from thy brawn" (line 120), as though Coriolanus' shield and arm have been fused into a single fighting entity.

Many critics³³ have remarked upon the intensity and the sincerity of Aufidius' welcome. Eugene Waith draws an interesting parallel with Shakespeare's source: "Plutarch's Aufidius makes only a brief and formal speech acknowledging the honour Coriolanus does him. Shakespeare's invention of a long speech, loaded with the metaphors of love, is the more striking at this point, since the preceding speech by Coriolanus follows Plutarch very closely indeed. The strong bond between the rival warriors is obviously important."³⁴ There is, though, an equally important qualification. Commentators have apparently neglected the fact that Aufidius chooses to deify Coriolanus in terms of a distinctly Roman deity--Mars, god of war. This is not to suggest that the Volscians, a people of Latium, did not themselves worship Mars. The point is that Coriolanus' reputation as a Martian soldier is wholly founded upon his exploits as the defender of Rome. The Mars named by Aufidius in this context can only be a Roman Mars. This must cast some doubt on the genuineness of the welcome, for though the Volscian general acknowledges the superlative military achievement of his former foe, the subtle assertion that such achievement in such a man will always owe its ultimate fidelity to a Roman ethos anticipates, even here, Aufidius' pretext for murder: "Read it not, noble lords; / But tell the traitor in the highest degree / He hath abus'd your powers" (V.vi.84-6, emphasis added). It predicts, as well, Coriolanus' clemency before the gates of Rome, an act later. Despite his declaration that "I will fight / Against my cank'red country with the spleen / Of all the under fiends" (IV.v.90-2), he can never quite escape his instinct to defend the city that nurtured him. And, for all his rhetoric of hate, he does not repudiate the Mars identification that Aufidius would bestow upon him. What seems to be an image of apotheosis ("Why, thou Mars") is, in fact, both an indication of Coriolanus' alienation and

vulnerability in Antium, and a reminder of his Roman obligation. It comes as no surprise that, in the assassination scene, the Volscian commander deploys the name of Mars venomously against his great competitor: "Name not the god, thou boy of tears--" (V.vi.101).

The context of the allusion to Mars at IV.v.118 and, in particular, the eight lines of Aufidius' speech that follow it, are also of crucial importance. In articulating his great rivalry with Coriolanus, the Volscian has recourse to the agency of the dream. "I have nightly since / Dreamt," he tells Marcius, "of encounters 'twixt thyself and me" (lines 122-3). In his sleep he has battled in hand to hand combat--and woken half dead with nothing. These words are reminiscent of Cleopatra's dream of Antony:

I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony--
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!

(Antony and Cleopatra V.ii.76-8)

It is half reality, half dream. There was an Antony but the imagination has transformed his life into proportions that reality alone could not sustain. He has become the stuff of myth. In both Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, we have seen that the integrity of various proposed mythologies is placed in question. The synthetic reputation of Julius Caesar is a necessary strategy for political survival and differs, in both subtlety and success, from the coarse and bogus mythologies of the conspirators. The falsity of Antony's "Herculean" stature is partially exposed by Ventidius who, refusing to campaign further in Antony's absence, observes: "Caesar and Antony have ever won / More in their officer, than person" (Antony and Cleopatra III.i.16-17). In Coriolanus, we face a similar problem of mythological credibility. At the very moment Aufidius pours praise on his ancient enemy, we, the audience, look at a ragged and embittered Marcius--a Marcius lacking in authority, unarmed, and totally at the mercy of his Volscian enemy. The play presents no discrepancy of word and actuality more forceful than this. As if to stress the point, Shakespeare immediately provides us

with a blunt burlesque of the process of mythic aggrandisement:³⁵

1 SERV. Here's a strange alteration!

2 SERV. By my hand, I had thought to have stricken him
with a cudgel; and yet my mind gave me his clothes
made a false report of him.

1 SERV. What an arm he has! He turn'd me about with his
finger and his thumb, as one would set up a top.

2 SERV. Nay, I knew by his face that there was something
in him; he had, sir, a kind of face, methought--
I cannot tell how to term it.

1 SERV. He had so, looking as it were--Would I were hang'd,
but I thought there was more in him than I could
think.

2 SERV. So did I, I'll be sworn. He is simply the rarest
man i' th' world.

1 SERV. I think he is; but a greater soldier than he you
wot one.

2 SERV. Who, my master?

(IV.v.148-64)

Well may the First Servingman remark upon this "strange alteration"! When first Coriolanus had appeared, ragged and unrecognised, at the door of Aufidius' house, he had been spurned and reviled. The servants had attempted, without success, to evict him. In the opinion of the Third Servingman, this strange intruder had been no more than "an ass" (IV.v.44); and the Second Servingman had thought of beating him "like a dog" (IV.v.51). Once his identity is known, though, he instantly acquires a noble look (lines 149-51), an arm, finger and thumb of Herculean strength (lines 152-3), a charismatic demeanour (lines 154-9). And, at last, he is "the rarest man i' th' world" (lines 160-1), and the greatest soldier as well (lines 162-3). Within two scenes, we are told that the Volscian soldiers use him as "the grace fore meat, / Their talk at table, and their thanks at end" (IV.vii.3-4). Not even one as alive to the ways of the world as Aufidius could have reckoned on the speed with which the human imagination, fanned by reputation and rumour, transforms the

foreign mortal into a god.

This process of bogus mythologisation is apparently not confined to Volscian quarters. Coriolanus' stature in Rome may well owe much to the same delusory mechanism. Here is one of the tribunes of the people, Junius Brutus:

Half all Cominius' honours are to Marcius,
Though Marcius earn'd them not; and all his faults
To Marcius shall be honours, though indeed
In aught he merit not.

(I.i.271-4)

The worth and sincerity of the tribunes and their views have been much discussed by modern critics. Though M.W. MacCallum finds some good in the two men, he concedes that in "the total effect they both seem to us pitiful busybodies, whose ill-earned influence only leads to disaster."³⁶ John Palmer³⁷ defends all the tribunes say or do, and Kenneth Muir associates them with "the cause of the people."³⁸ While F.H. Rouda³⁹ and Jay L. Halio⁴⁰ consider some of the tribunes' views to be misguided, Dean Frye goes so far as to suggest that "there is really no reason to withhold the term 'villain'"⁴¹ from either Sicinius or Brutus. Given this variation in opinion, there might appear to be some grounds for reserving judgement on Brutus' claims at I.i.271-4 (above). Yet, such accusations are given credence by the patrician Menenius, himself, in this damaging admission to the Volscian watch:

I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover. I have been
The book of his good acts whence men have read
His fame unparallel'd haply amplified;
For I have ever verified my friends--
Of whom he's chief--with all the size that verity
Would without lapsing suffer. Nay, sometimes,
Like to a bowl upon a subtle ground,
I have tumbled past the throw, and in his praise
Have almost stamp'd the leasing

(V.ii.13-22. Emphasis added.)

It is beyond question that Coriolanus is a magnificent Roman soldier, but, in Menenius' hint of amplification, it seems clear that some part of the hero's reputation is indebted to exaggerated report. We have not, here, the extremity of Julius Caesar, where the dramatist provides us with little actual justification for Caesar's self-constructed mythology of magnificence. In fact, Coriolanus never mythologises himself in Classical terms, and the mantle of a god is a verbal mantle bestowed upon him more at the insistence of others than himself. Though he does not openly reject Aufidius' Mars metaphor (IV.v.118), his response, at the end of the Volscian's accolade, is a simple "You bless me, gods!" (IV.v.135)--an acceptance, it would seem, of his subordination within the cosmic hierarchy. This is not to deny, of course, that he may well appreciate praise from those he esteems. When he has turned away Menenius in V.iii, he regrets his own ingratitude because the old man has "Lov'd me above the measure of a father; / Nay, godded me indeed" (lines 10-11). Even so, it seems unreasonable to argue that the probability of his mythic overestimation is the product of any personal ambition in that direction. It is, more properly, a manufacture of the popular imagination.

After the acme of Aufidius' Mars-Coriolanus equation, the significance of the Mars mythology alters quite dramatically. This is how the Third Servingman assesses the consequences of Marcius' arrival in the Volscian camp:

Why, he is so made on here within as if he were son and heir to Mars; set at upper end o' th' table; no question asked him by any of the senators but they stand bald before him. Our general himself makes a mistress of him, sanctifies himself with's hand, and turns up the white o' th' eye to his discourse. But the bottom of the news is, our general is cut i' th' middle and but one half of what he was yesterday, for the other has half by the entreaty and grant of the whole table.

(IV.v.191-200. Emphasis added.)

The servingman's phrase "son and heir to Mars" has an interesting

parallel in Vincentio Saviolo's work His Practise. In two Bookes (London, 1595): "For whosoeuer will followe this profession [soldiery] must flie from rashnes, pride, and iniurie, and not fall into that foule falt and error which many men incurre, who feeling themselues to be strong of bodie and expert in this science, presuming thereupon, thinke that they may lawfully offer outrage and iniury vnto anie man, and with crosse and grosse tearmes and behauour prouoke euerie man to fight, as though they were the onely heirs of Mars, & more inuincible than Achilles"⁴² (emphasis added). The book is not a translation. Saviolo, though obviously of foreign extraction, writes in English for an English audience. His phrase "the onely heirs of Mars" carries with it a pejorative intent that may have characterised the expression in popular Elizabethan usage.⁴³ If this is so, the Third Servingman's "son and heir to Mars" could harbour a disparaging connotation. At any rate, Aufidius' metaphor is here demoted to a simile, and the use of simile presumes distinctions of sort. Rather like Cleopatra's "but yet," the servingman's "as if" (line 191) allays the good precedence. While Coriolanus may be verbally deified by friend and foe alike, his very mortality distinguishes him from Mars and the other immortal gods. It is no coincidence that, in the scene that immediately precedes the assassination, Menenius remarks, of Coriolanus, "He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in" (V.iv.23-4). Without the sanctuary of "eternity," and outside his native Rome, Caius Marcius is as vulnerable as any man might be in the city of the Volscians. As early as I.x.15, the scheming Aufidius, discarding the mythic idealism of his sworn enemy, had vowed to "potch at him some way." By V.vi he is in a position to carry out the threat.

The Third Servingman's comparison of Coriolanus to the "son and heir" of Mars is interesting in other ways. In 1 Henry IV, Hotspur is described as "Mars in swathing clothes" (III.ii.112), suggesting his potential rôle as a new English Mars inspired by the English mythology of the History plays. As things turn out, Hotspur chooses, instead, the road to rebellion and the field at Shrewsbury. The words "son and heir," like "swathing

clothes," touch upon the intriguing question of potential inheritance. When, in V.iii, Volumnia introduces the Boy Marcius to his estranged father, Coriolanus, she describes him as "a poor epitome of yours" (line 68) who may, in time, "show like all yourself" (line 70). Coriolanus, too, sees his son as his inheritor:

The god of soldiers,
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform
Thy thoughts with nobleness, that thou mayst prove
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' th' wars
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw,
And saving those that eye thee!

(V.iii.70-5)

In what is, once more, an implicit statement of subordination within the cosmic hierarchy, Marcius invokes those military qualities that have inspired his own life. Though he has openly declared himself immune to national and familial sentiment, he acknowledges that the Boy Marcius is his physical offspring and the heir to his Roman military spirit. This sense of a regenerating greatness is one that takes us back to the English History plays and their theme of heroic renewal. In 1 Henry VI, Talbot tells his son, John, of his hope that "Talbot's name might be in thee reviv'd" (IV.v.3), and, in Coriolanus, a pleading Virgilia picks up that theme when she reminds Marcius that her womb "brought you forth this boy to keep your name / Living to time" (V.iii.126-7). With regard to the "regeneration" motif, it is unfortunate that the Boy Marcius does not have a more prominent position in the play. The few lines he is given (V.iii.127-8) reveal a fiery military temperament that seems well suited to the rôle of heir apparent.

The play's development of the bond between Volumnia and Coriolanus, between mother and son, is far more compelling. Twice Volumnia reminds us that Marcius is the child of her womb. At I.iii.7-8, she remembers the time "When yet he was but tender-bodied, and the only son of my womb." And in the final act, when she confronts a Coriolanus who is allegedly committed to

the way of the anti-mythology, she warns that

thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread--
Trust to't, thou shalt not--on thy mother's womb
That brought thee to this world.

(V.iii.122-5)

Shakespeare follows Plutarch⁴⁴ very closely here and, for this reason, it is inadvisable to give too much weight to the idea that, in assailing Rome, Marcius is assailing the womb that gave him life. There can be little doubt, though, that the double sense of the womb as a nurturing and reproductive organ ("That brought thee to this world"), and the womb as the victim of its own deadly offspring ("to tread . . . on thy mother's womb"), suits well the schemata of myth and anti-myth. The image of the "womb" extends beyond the literal sense of a place of physical beginnings. In Volumnia's case, it is, as well, the symbolic life-source of a Roman military spirit. The text makes it clear to us that the values to which Coriolanus aspires with such inflexible conviction are inherited from his mother. As F.H. Rouda puts it, "She it is who has made him the man he is."⁴⁵ In each of the following quotations, Volumnia is speaking:

I have lived
To see inherited my very wishes,
And the buildings of my fancy; only
There's one thing wanting, which I doubt not but
Our Rome will cast upon thee.

(II.i.188-92)

I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast said
My praises made thee first a soldier, so,
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before.

(III.ii.107-10)

Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me

(III.ii.129)

Volumnia has guided Coriolanus to her ideal manhood, and is the

one person who can consistently influence his actions.

It is fair to say that, in the course of Coriolanus, the "influence" she exercises is of a prudent and conciliatory character. In the Classical world, as we have seen in our chapter on Henry IV, Minerva (Pallas Athene) is the goddess who holds most sway over Mars, for, as Stephen Batman puts it, "By Minerva is signified Wisdome, ioyned to Force, to qualifie extremities."⁴⁶ An engraving by Jacob Goltzius, dated 1597, reveals Mars soliciting the guidance of Minerva, and bears the inscription "Mars needs the help of Pallas Athene. Warfare needs good deliberation"⁴⁷ (translation). The demands of the dynastic motif, and especially, of the mother-son relationship within that motif, make the use of Minerva impractical in any proposed Classicisation of the play's familial bonds. For this reason, Shakespeare is constrained to identify Volumnia with Juno, the traditional mother of Mars—an identification that has no precedent in Plutarch's "The Life of Martius Coriolanus."

VOLUMNIA. Honourable Menenius, my boy Marcius approaches;
for the love of Juno let's go.

MENENIUS. Ha! Marcius coming home?

VOLUMNIA. Ay, worthy Menenius, and with most prosperous
approbation.

MENENIUS. Take my cap, Jupiter, and I thank thee. Hoo!
Marcius coming home!

(II.i.93-9. Emphasis added.)

According to Homer⁴⁸ and Hesiod,⁴⁹ Mars is the son of Jupiter and Juno. It is intriguing that, in the quotation above, the names of both parents appear in such proximity. "Jupiter" or "Jove" are used in loose appellative or expletive form on eight occasions in the play (I.iii.38; I.ix.90; II.i.256; III.i.86, 107, and 257; IV.v.103; V.iii.71), and we may not be entitled to derive any special significance for it here, though Menenius does refer to "my son Coriolanus" at V.ii.60-1, and Marcius confirms that the old man "Lov'd me above the measure of a father" at V.iii.10. Even if Menenius does not convincingly fulfil a paternal rôle, the absence of a father figure is no serious impediment to the Classicisation of the dynastic motif.

It may, in fact, enhance it. Some commentators affirm that Juno, goddess of motherhood, was impregnated by one of Flora's magic flowers, and she so dispensed with the need for a male companion. In Ovid's Fasti, Flora describes the conception of Mars in this way: "Straightway I plucked with my thumb the clinging flower and touched Juno, and she conceived when it touched her bosom."⁵⁰ The fable is well recorded in writings of the Elizabethan period. Thomas Cooper, in Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae (1584), recounts how Flora told Juno that "in the fieldes of Olenius was a flower, which if shee did touche, she should foorthwith conceiue without companie of men. Juno proouing that, conceiued and brought foorth a sonne, which she called Mars."⁵¹ This is the only explanation of Mars' birth that Cooper offers. Abraham Fraunce, in The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch (1592), notes briefly that "Ioue, they say, had Minerua without a mother, and therefore Iuno would needs haue Mars without a father."⁵² Certainly, in the extremity of her grief and resentment after Marcius has been exiled, Volumnia stands alone amongst the Roman patricians. After Coriolanus' expulsion, Menenius is prepared to greet the tribunes with a friendly "Hail to you both" (IV.vi.12), but Volumnia is full of venom and "Juno-like anger":

O, y'are well met; th' hoarded plague o' th' gods
Requite your love!

(Volumnia to the Tribunes. IV.ii.11-12)

Come, let's go.

Leave this faint puling and lament as I do,
In anger, Juno-like.

(Volumnia to Virgilia. IV.ii.51-3)

Spite and anger are the traditional hallmarks of the goddess Juno's Classical character.⁵³ Volumnia, too, is in possession of these qualities, but we cannot neglect, as well, the calming and moderating influence she has over her son throughout the play. This curious blend is not one commonly associated with Juno, but there is possibly a trace of it in a print catalogued by Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne that reveals Juno and

Minerva grasping a sceptre, their arms entwined:

Fortune donne aux Roys tel aduantage,
Que leur vouloir (soit bien ou mal) est fait;
Mais si Iuno n'a de Pallas la sage
Le bon conseil, son pouuoir est défait.⁵⁴

The picture of a passive and disciplined Juno contrasts sharply with more popular representations of a tempestuous goddess prone to malicious extremes of action. It also has a bearing on Shakespeare's identification of the goddess with Volumnia in which the characterisation of an outright hostility is tempered by a measure of political acumen.

When Coriolanus leads his Volscian army against the city of his birth, he breaches the dynastic structure. Confronted by his mother, wife and child, he declares defiantly:

I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand
As if a man were author of himself
And knew no other kin.

(V.iii.34-7)

This disavowal of the dynastic motif would seem to herald the destruction of the most powerful familial bond in the play-- and with it the destruction of Rome itself. But, for all his threats and promises, Coriolanus is unable to avoid the familiar modes of the Roman mythology. Even as he prepares to deny his parentage, he betrays his Roman bias:

My mother bows,
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod

(V.iii.29-31)

"Olympus," as a metonymy for the immortal world, establishes, once more, Coriolanus' acceptance of subordination within a universal hierarchy. "Olympus," as a pseudonym for Volumnia, and, implicitly, for Queen Juno, reasserts the familial bond in Classical form. And, as Coriolanus' destructive resolution begins to crumble, the dramatist has him swear not by the now

familiar "Jupiter" but by "the jealous queen of heaven" (V.iii.46) herself--an allusion that, like the other Juno references, has no precedent in Plutarch's "The Life of Martius Coriolanus." By surrendering to the wishes of Volumnia, Marcius reaffirms the theme of familial obligation. Not surprisingly, he does so in mythological fashion:

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome
(V.iii.182-6)

At the moment Coriolanus accepts his filial identity ("O mother, mother!"), the heavens open and the gods look down upon what has been an "unnatural scene"--unnatural not only because "it was 'unnatural' for the defender of Rome to be acting as the destroyer of his native city,"⁵⁵ as Maurice Charney rightly remarks, but also because familial rôles were confused and inverted. Volumnia knelt to Coriolanus. Significantly, the revivification of the dynastic motif is expressed in terms of a deific world picture restored. Coriolanus is, once again, the "Mars" son of his mother "Juno," and, once again, Rome rests safe under his guardianship.

Coriolanus' filial duty and his decision not to annihilate Rome both find statement in a single action--submission to Volumnia. In mythological terms, this focal point may be seen as an intersection of two distinct "Mars" strains. On the one hand, Mars has come to represent a quality of kinship in the dynastic motif, and, on the other, the name of the god has become synonymous with the military values most highly esteemed in the Roman view of the world, in the Roman mythology. In assuaging her son's anti-mythological intent, Volumnia is both the triumphant mother reclaiming her son, and, to use Ridley's phrase, "Rome incarnate"⁵⁶ regaining its patron.

These restatements of fidelity are no defence against the machinations of Aufidius. Marcius' clemency is just the weapon

the Volscian has been looking for. Branded a traitor and a coward, Marcius appeals to the god he has worshipped throughout the play:

CORIOLANUS. Hear'st thou, Mars!
AUFIDIUS. Name not the god, thou boy of tears--
CORIOLANUS. Ha!
AUFIDIUS. --no more.
CORIOLANUS. Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
 Too great for what contains it. 'Boy'! O slave!
 (V.vi.100-4)

As in Marcius' first Mars allusion (I.iv.10), the god is here a conceptual perfection whose sympathy or assistance is to be petitioned in time of need. Far from equating Coriolanus and Mars, as once he did, Aufidius now dismantles the association insisting on a clear distinction between the myth and the mortal: "Name not the god, thou boy of tears" (line 101). Yet, the Roman hero repeats the word "Boy" (line 104), and is unconcerned with Aufidius' taunt of "Name not the god." This is not really surprising. To one who has never claimed a Mars identity, the jibe of "boy," with all its unmanly connotations, is far more offensive than a deific disassociation. It is "the impugning of his manhood"⁵⁷ that most hurts Coriolanus. He responds by reminding Aufidius, and the Volscian nobles, of his most famous Roman endeavour--the Corioli episode:

 'Boy'! False hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli.
Alone I did it. 'Boy'!

 (V.vi.113-17)

Paul Jorgensen makes the interesting observation that "Plutarch's hero is slain before he has a chance to speak in his defence. In Shakespeare's version he is allowed to speak, and 'gentle words' might save his life."⁵⁸ In a defence that is less than conciliatory, and with words that are far from gentle, Marcius recalls, for all present, his function as Rome's defender.

In some respects, Coriolanus looks back to its mythological roots. The myth/anti-myth structures of the early Histories are echoed in the saga of a Roman hero who is, at different times, both the defender and the enemy of the city that gave him life. It would be inappropriate to argue that the wheel has come full circle. The calculated myth scheme that Shakespeare deploys in Coriolanus is a far cry from the allusive profusion of the First Tetralogy. It is, though, important to view this achievement in developmental terms. While Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus may represent impressive advances in subtlety and cohesion, their mythological designs are, as we have seen, indebted to both Julius Caesar and the English History plays.

Coriolanus

Notes

- ¹ Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies (Macmillan Press, 1976), p. 173.
- ² The Herculean Hero (Chatto & Windus, 1962).
- ³ "Coriolanus: Boy of Tears," Essays in Criticism, 5 (1955), p. 31. Maurice Charney, in Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 189, observes that "Mars is in fact identified as Coriolanus' god throughout the play, which gives a special sting to Aufidius' final taunt: 'Name not the god, thou boy of tears!' (5.6.100)."
- ⁴ Honigmann, Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies, p. 208: "The other important association is with Mars."
- ⁵ I have used, throughout, T.J.B. Spencer's edition of Shakespeare's Plutarch (1964; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968).
- ⁶ Caius Suetonius Tranquillus, The Lives of the Caesars, trans. J.C. Rolfe (William Heinemann, 1914), I, 167 (Bk.II. xxix). Pollard and Redgrave, in A Short-Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640, list a 1606 English translation of this work by Philemon Holland.
- ⁷ Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession (J. Kingston for R. Walley, 1581), sig. A2^r.
- ⁸ Rich, Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession, sig. A2^v.
- ⁹ The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres, Discoursed in Dialogue wise (R. Field for W. Ponsonby, 1598), p. 2^r.
- ¹⁰ Barret, The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres, p. 4^r.
- ¹¹ Barret, The Theorike And Practike Of Moderne Warres, p. 4^r.
- ¹² Cooper ascribes this function to Mars in Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae tam accurate congestus, vt nihil penè in

eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latine complectatur amplissimus Stephani Thesaurus, vel Anglice, toties aucta Eliotae Bibliotheca (1565, first publ.; John Torkington, 1584), sig. 7H4^r.

¹³ See Charney's chapter on Coriolanus in Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, pp. 142-96.

¹⁴ See Bowden's paper "The 'Unco Guid' and Shakespeare's Coriolanus," Shakespeare Quarterly, 13 (1962), 41-8.

¹⁵ "Coriolanus: Shakespeare's 'Drama of Reconciliation,'" Shakespeare Studies, 6 (1970), p. 291.

¹⁶ Maurice Charney deals at some length with the play's theme of isolation in Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama (pp. 177-96).

¹⁷ The Iliad, trans. E.V. Rieu (1950; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), p. 115.

¹⁸ Gaius Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, trans. J.H. Mozley (William Heinemann Ltd., 1934), p. 303 (Bk.VI, lines 28-9). H.M. Adams, in his compilation Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501-1600, in Cambridge Libraries (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), II, lists numerous pre-1600 continental publications of Argonautica: Venice (1501), Florence (1503), Florence (1517), Paris (1519), Venice (1523), Paris (1532), Lyons (1548), Antwerp (1565 and 1566).

¹⁹ This incident, discussed in the chapter on the Henry IV plays, is recorded in Homer's Iliad, trans. E.V. Rieu: "But directly the Butcher Ares saw the gallant son of Tydeus, he left Periphas to lie where he had met his death, and made straight for Diomedes tamer of horses. When the two had come to close quarters, Ares began the fight with what he meant to be a mortal blow. He thrust at Diomedes with his bronze spear over the yoke and the horses' reigps. But Athene of the Flashing Eyes, catching the shaft in her hand, pushed it up above the chariot, where it spent its force in the air. Diomedes of the loud war-cry then brought his spear into play, and Pallas Athene drove it home against the lower part of Ares' belly, where he wore an apron round his middle. There the blow landed, wounding the god and

tearing his fair flesh. Diomedes drew out his spear, and Brazen Ares let forth a yell as loud as the war-cry of nine thousand or ten thousand battling men" (p. 115).

20 "Commentary in Shakespeare: the Case of Coriolanus," Shakespeare Studies, 1 (1965), p. 112.

21 "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," PMLA, 64 (1949), p. 221.

22 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 308.

23 Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 325.

24 Homer, The Iliad, trans. E.V. Rieu, p. 116.

25 Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, trans. J.H. Mozley, p. 133 (Bk.III, lines 83-6).

26 The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction (1599; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), sigs. Xl^r-Xl^v. In a passage quoted in the chapter on the Henry IV plays, Linche talks of Death "whose face was ouerwasht with bloud, and hackt with many and cruell slashes, wherevpon a stately altar, he was offering sacrifices in goblets made with the skuls of men, and filled vp euen to the brim with humane bloud; which oblation was consecrated to god Mars, with coales of fire (which set on flame the sacrifice) fetcht from many Citties, Townes, and Holds, burnt and ruinated by tyrannie of the Warres."

27 English Woodcuts 1480-1535 (Oxford: The University Press, 1973), Nos. 880, 975 and 1538.

28 Honigmann, Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies, p. 185.

29 "Coriolanus: The Tragedy of Politics," Shakespeare Quarterly, 17 (1966), p. 198.

30 It is worth noting that the link between Coriolanus and Death is not one developed in Plutarch's original.

31 An historicall collection of the continuall factions of the Romans and Italians. An abridgement or rather a bridge of Roman histories (1601, first publ.; T. East for R. More, 1608), p. 75.

³² See Lemprière's Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors, rev. F.A. Wright (1949; rpt. London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), "Mars." Barry Cunliffe, in Rome And Her Empire (The Bodley Head, 1978), has this to say of the Roman war god Mars: "All spoils of war were consecrated to him as offerings, and no Roman commander would go into battle without first having entered the temple of Mars to pray for the god's protection and blessing" (p. 111).

³³ Paul A. Jorgensen, in Shakespeare's Military World (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), speaks of the "first warmth of the alliance" (p. 52) between Aufidius and Coriolanus. Maurice Charney, in Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, writes that "From the low point at Antium after his exile (IV.iv) Coriolanus is raised to a height of pride unparalleled in the first part of the play. . . . The motif begins when Aufidius chooses to welcome his old rival rather than cut his throat" (p. 188). P. Brockbank, ed., Coriolanus (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976), p. 51, calls it a "delighted greeting."

³⁴ Waith, The Herculean Hero, p. 131.

³⁵ There is, once again, no precedent for this burlesque in Plutarch's "The Life of Martius Coriolanus."

³⁶ Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 535.

³⁷ Political Characters of Shakespeare (Macmillan and Co., 1945), pp. 258-60. On p. 260, Palmer claims that the Tribunes "regard themselves as watch-dogs of the people, and Shakespeare, in this opening scene, is at some pains to show that they are well-qualified for their office and that they intend to be alert and vigilant in its exercise."

³⁸ "In Defence of the Tribunes," Essays in Criticism, 4 (1954), p. 332.

³⁹ F.H. Rouda, in "Coriolanus--A Tragedy of Youth," Shakespeare Quarterly, 12 (1961), suggests that Coriolanus is not the enemy of the people, "he is enemy to their cowardice and inconstancy"

(p. 103), and argues that it is with "the zeal of the reformer that he harasses them, not from pride of class" (p. 103).

⁴⁰ Referring to III.i.80-2, Jay L. Halio, in "Coriolanus: Shakespeare's 'Drama of Reconciliation,'" points out that the "tribunes draw an absolute and false antithesis: between gods and men. Coriolanus has drawn one only between superior and inferior human beings" (p. 293).

⁴¹ Frye, "Commentary in Shakespeare: the Case of Coriolanus," p. 110.

⁴² His Practise. In two Bookes. The first intreating of the vse of the Rapier and Dagger. The second, of Honor and honorable Quarrels (John Wolfe, 1595), sig. B2^r.

⁴³ Horace Howard Furness, ed., A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Tragedie of Coriolanus (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1928), does not comment on the phrase and provides no Elizabethan or Jacobean parallels to its usage. The same is true of Philip Brockbank's Arden edition of Coriolanus (1976; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976).

⁴⁴ Spencer, ed., Shakespeare's Plutarch, p. 354: "thou shalt see, my son, and trust unto it, thou shalt no sooner march forward to assault thy country but thy foot shall tread upon thy mother's womb, that brought thee first into this world."

⁴⁵ Rouda, "Coriolanus--A Tragedy of Youth," p. 104.

⁴⁶ The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes (1577; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 5^r.

⁴⁷ The cut, after a now lost engraving by Hendrik Goltzius, is recorded by F.W.H. Hollstein in Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450-1700 (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1949), VIII, p. 131 (no. 128). Hollstein titles the engraving: "Pallas Athene surrounded by warriors."

⁴⁸ H.J. Rose, in A Handbook of Greek Mythology, 6th ed. (1958; rpt. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978), writes that Ares "is already a recognized member of the Olympic circle by the time of Homer, and is the son of Zeus and Hera" (p. 157). See Homer's

Iliad, trans. E.V. Rieu, p. 116.

49 See Hesiod's Theogony, ed. M.L. West (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), lines 901-29, which deal with Zeus' matrimonial affairs. On the evidence of H.M. Adams' Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501-1600, in Cambridge Libraries, there were at least three pre-1600 editions of this work: Venice (1537), Florence (1540), and Venice (1543).

50 Fasti, trans. Sir James George Frazer (William Heinemann Ltd., 1931), p. 279 (Bk.V, lines 255-6). Pollard and Redgrave, in A Short-Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640, cite a 1574 edition of this work, published by "T. Vautrollerius."

51 Cooper, Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanae & Britannicae, sig. 7H4^r.

52 The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch (1592; facsimile rpt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 38^r (printed as 32^r).

53 These qualities are amply illustrated in Ovid's Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), where Juno deals, in a most uncompromising fashion, with her rivals Io (pp. 44-8), Callisto (pp. 61-4), Semele (pp. 80-3), and Ino (pp. 105-8).

54 Emblemata: Handbuch Zur Sinnbildkunst Des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), column 1731. The cut in question is the work of Guillaume de La Perriere (1499-1565).

55 Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, p. 176.

56 M.R. Ridley, Shakespeare's Plays: A Commentary (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1937), p. 196: "This magnificent and arrogant warrior, who bends his head neither to God nor man, bows before his mother; and she is worthy of the submission, for she is more than the typical Roman matron; she is Rome incarnate, the Eternal City, whom all her great sons obeyed and served."

57 Waith, The Herculean Hero, p. 142.

58 Jorgensen makes this remark in his paper "Shakespeare's

Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," p. 234.